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Campaigners plan legal challenges to Sunak's U-turn on green policies

Watchdog says changes will make it harder to meet legal commitments

Fiona Harvey
Ajit Niranjan
Aubrey Allegretti

Rishi Sunak is likely to face legal challenges aimed at thwarting his plans to U-turn on net zero policies, amid further international condemnation.

As the prime minister sought to shrug off criticism of his plans yesterday, the UK's independent climate watchdog said the changes would make it harder for Britain to meet its legal commitments, while a top European politician said Sunak risked turning the UK into "a climate villain and destroying its international reputation as a climate leader."

Campaigners including Friends of the Earth and the Good Law Project are now assessing how they can stop a plan that would allow new petrol and diesel cars, and gas boilers, to be sold for longer. The groups were already involved in legal action over the government's climate plans, on the grounds that they were inadequate.

The Good Law Project has written to the energy secretary, Claire Coutinho, to warn of a fresh court challenge. In a letter seen by the Guardian, lawyers acting for the group asked for answers within seven days to questions over how the government would meet its carbon goals while watering down and delaying green policies.

Friends of the Earth has also written to the government. Niall Toru, its senior lawyer, said: "Sunak's decision to weaken UK climate policies will make it harder to meet our climate targets. Our lawyers will carefully scrutinise any new set of plans. Friends of the Earth has successfully taken legal action against the government's climate strategy in the past – and we are prepared to do so again if Mr Sunak's sums don't add up."

Clean air campaigners are also considering a challenge. Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, whose daughter Ella died of air pollution, warned: "We will most likely end up in court again. [This is] a public health crisis as well as a green issue."

The Climate Change Committee, the statutory adviser on net zero, will scrutinise the prime minister's proposals to judge whether they are in line with the UK's legally binding obligations on greenhouse gas emissions. Piers Forster, the chair of the committee, said the rollback was likely to put the UK further behind on its targets. "We need to go away and do the calculations, but [Sunak's] announcement is likely to take the UK further away from being able to meet its legal commitments," he said. "This, coupled with the recent unsuccessful offshore wind auction, gives us concern."

Chris Stark, the chief executive of the CCC, warned yesterday that he was "finding it hard not to be disappointed" by the government's moves. "Earlier 8 →

Murdoch ends reign at Fox and News Corp

Dominic Rushe
New York

Rupert Murdoch is stepping down as chair of Fox and News Corp, ending a seven-decade run as one of the world's most influential and controversial media moguls.

In a note to staff first reported in the Murdoch-controlled Wall Street Journal, he wrote: "For my entire professional life, I have been engaged daily with news and ideas, and that will not change. But the time is right for me to take on different roles."

Murdoch, 92, will become chairman emeritus of the two corporations, the company said in a release.

Lachlan Murdoch, 52, the mogul's eldest son, now seems to be his successor. In the note Murdoch called Lachlan a "passionate, principled leader" who can take the companies into the future.

Lachlan Murdoch said in a statement: "On behalf 4 →



▲ *Rupert Murdoch described his eldest son Lachlan, right, in his note to staff as a 'passionate, principled leader'* PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

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News

Support for European populist parties surging, study finds



▼ *Giorgia Meloni of the Brothers of Italy party, one of the new wave of populist far-right leaders in Europe*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALESSIA PIERDOMENICO/GETTY

Jon Henley
Europe correspondent

Almost one-third of Europeans now vote for populist, far-right or far-left parties, research shows, with wide support for anti-establishment politics surging across the continent in an increasingly problematic challenge to the mainstream.

Analysis by more than 100 political scientists across 31 countries found in national elections last year a record 32% of European voters cast their ballots for anti-establishment parties, compared with 20% in the early 2000s and 12% in the early 1990s.

The research, led by Matthijs Rooduijn, a political scientist at the University of Amsterdam, shared exclusively with the Guardian, also found that about half of anti-establishment voters supported far-right parties – and this was the vote share increasing most rapidly.

"There's fluctuation, but the underlying trend is the numbers keep rising," Rooduijn said. "Mainstream parties are losing votes; anti-establishment parties are gaining. It matters, because many studies now show that when populists secure power, or influence over power, the quality of liberal democracy declines."

In a sign of how far the rise of the nativist far right has shifted Europe's politics rightwards, the researchers considered classifying several better-known centre-right parties as borderline far-right. "We talked a lot about reclassifying the UK's Conservatives, Mark Rutte's VVD in the Netherlands, Les Républicains in France and the ÖVP in Austria," Rooduijn said. "In the end we didn't because nativism was not their core focus. But we may in future."

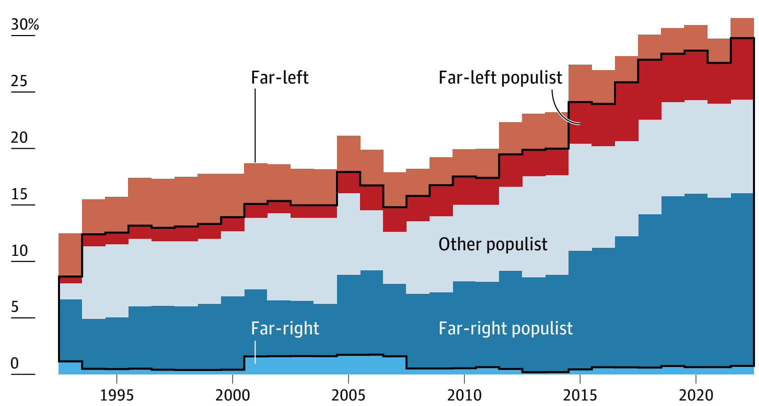
The PopuList was launched five years ago in partnership with the Guardian. This year it identifies 234 anti-establishment parties across Europe, including 165 populist parties (most either far left or far right). It classes 61 parties as far left and 112 as far right (most, but not all, populist).

Usually combined with a rightwing or leftwing "host ideology", populism divides society into two homogenous and opposing groups, a "pure people" versus a "corrupt elite", and argues politics should be an expression of the "will of the people".

Its supporters say it is a democratic corrective, privileging the ordinary person against elites, vested interests and an entrenched establishment. Critics say populists in power often subvert democratic norms, undermining the judiciary and media or restricting minority rights, sometimes in ways that will long outlast their mandates.

"For populists, everything that stands between 'the will of the people' and policymaking is bad," Rooduijn said. "That includes all those vital checks and balances – a free press, independent courts, protections for minorities – that are an essential part of a liberal democracy."

European populist parties have more than doubled their vote share in the last 30 years
Vote share of parties by classification in 31 European countries, weighted by population



Source: Party classification from The PopuList 3.0, Vote share data from ParlGov and World Bank

Joining Hungary's self-professed illiberal leader, Viktor Orbán, and Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, several populist far-right leaders and parties including Giorgia Meloni in Italy and, in the Nordic region, the Finns party and the Sweden Democrats, have recently entered or are underwriting government coalitions.

Others are seeing a big surge in popularity. Austria's Freedom party is comfortably ahead in the polls a year from elections, Germany's AfD has doubled its prospective vote share to 22% and is lying second, ahead of the centre-left SPD, while Marine Le Pen looks on course to have her best run yet at the French presidency.

A multitude of factors lie behind the trend, according to the researchers, who examined parties that had won at least one seat or 2% of the vote in national parliament elections since 1989. "Far-right parties, in particular, have broadened their voter base and are forging coalitions of voters with very different concerns," said Daphne Halikiopoulou, a comparative political scientist at the University of York and a PopuList co-author.

"Their big issue was always immigration. That's still there, but cultural concerns now account for only a small part of their electorate. They've gone way beyond that core following."

People were now voting far right "who never used to and you wouldn't expect to: older women, urban voters, the educated middle class. They're willing to trade democracy for something, to say: 'I know this leader is authoritarian – but at least he'll bring economic stability.'"

Mujtaba Rahman, of the Eurasia Group, said centre-right parties were "adopting more hardline positions on climate, immigration and LGBTQ rights, but there are limits to how successful this may prove". He said: "Most far-right parties have moved decisively to the centre on economic and foreign policy, and in their views of the EU."

In next year's European parliament elections, he predicted another centrist majority. "Moving to the far right is unlikely to be the panacea many parties believe."

A-levels could be scrapped as Sunak mulls 'baccalaureate'

Nadeem Badshah

The A-level system in England could be replaced with a "British baccalaureate" in which children would study more subjects after turning 16, according to reports.

The proposals include English and maths becoming compulsory until the age of 18, the Times said. Students would be required to study a wider range of subjects after turning 16.

A Conservative source told the paper that Rishi Sunak would press ahead with the plan, having initially suggested it during his unsuccessful leadership campaign against Liz Truss last year. The source added: "He came back from the summer with a series of things he wanted to move on. A-level reform is a critical part of it."

In 2021, the EDSK education thinktank found that A-levels were too narrow and should be replaced with a three-year "baccalaureate" that covers all academic, applied and technical courses. Its report said students should be required to study English and maths up to the age of 18, in line with other developed nations. The report said the dominance of A-levels in the English education system had relegated applied and technical courses to second-class status.

About half of 18-year-olds in England take A-levels, meaning they typically sit exams in three subjects. Rather than narrowing down choices, the baccalaureate would in theory allow students to retain more breadth in their studies and only gradually specialise over the three-year programme.

A senior government source told the Times that options were being looked into and no final decision had been taken.

Robert Halfon, the minister for skills, apprenticeships and higher education, has previously backed the idea of a "British baccalaureate". He said: "The advantage of the British baccalaureate is it will mean that students have a much wider curriculum, so they get the skills that they need and employers want."

> *'Students would have a wider curriculum, so they get the skills they need'*
>
> **Robert Halfon**
> *Minister*

Education is devolved, so any policy would apply only in England.

A-levels were first awarded in 1951 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and until the early 1960s the qualification was awarded only at the grades of pass and distinction.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Since 2010 we have made huge progress in driving up school standards and giving young people the best start in life, with record funding for schools and more full-time teachers than ever before. We have already taken steps to reform the post-16 qualifications landscape, including reforming technical education and delivering millions of new high-quality apprenticeships.

"Alongside this, we have set out bold plans to ensure that every young person studies some form of maths up to the age of 18 to give them the skills they need to succeed in the jobs of the future."

Brussels urged not to exclude UK shows from quota system for streaming sites



◀ The Downton Abbey film. The franchise is one of the most popular British productions across Europe
PHOTOGRAPH: BEN BLACKALL/UNIVERSAL/PA



▲ Aimee Lou Wood and Emma Mackey in Netflix's Sex Education
PHOTOGRAPH: SAM TAYLOR/NETFLIX



◀ British shows such as Peaky Blinders take up a high share of the quota across the EU
PHOTOGRAPH: BBC

Philip Oltermann
European culture editor

Brussels must not "shut the door" on British film and television, MEPs have said, as the European Commission considers excluding the UK from a quota system designed to boost European productions on streaming platforms.

In order to operate across Europe, streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney+ have to ensure at least 30% of the films in their online catalogues are "European works".

The quota includes the 27 EU member states and countries including Britain, Turkey, and Switzerland. But, in the wake of Britain's departure from the EU, France is leading calls to cut UK productions from the list. However, in a sign of a growing split between the two biggest member states, German MEPs appear to be leading the pushback.

"Especially now that many British people are starting to recognise that Brexit wasn't the best idea, we should be leaving doors open, not shut them," said Sabine Verheyen, a German MEP who chairs the European parliament's committee on culture and education.

"While we are seeking a close cooperation with the UK in areas like education or musicians' abilities to work across borders, it makes absolutely no sense to have a different stance on film."

A policy discussion document that was circulated around Brussels at the start of the year proposed that "since the UK is no longer a member of the EU, works originating in the UK should no longer be considered as European" for the purposes of the quota. The same move was considered for Switzerland, "which has never expressed the wish to be part of the EU".

A European Commission report published in May highlighted the disproportionate share of streaming platforms' catalogues taken up by British films and British-American co-productions, increasing concerns among some MEPs that Brussels is seriously considering pulling the plug on the UK's place in the quota.

Verheyen warned that excluding British-American co-produced films could have the unintended consequence of limiting European films' ability to reach international audiences. "If we shut the door on them, why shouldn't they shut the door on us?" she said.

In spite of the success of recent non-English language films and series, such as Lupin, Money Heist, and Edward Berger's Oscar-winning All Quiet on the Western Front, the commission's May report showed the European film industry was punching below its weight on Netflix and other streaming platforms.

Across the EU, British films and shows were almost as prominently displayed on streaming platforms' catalogues as those from the EU27 combined, once "national" films were excluded. British productions took up 9% of the large streaming platforms on average, almost a third of the quota for European works.

The report also noted that most of the British films in the top 100 were actually British-American co-productions.

The report cited independent research commissioned in 2022 and 2023 that found that the most popular British series across Europe by share of viewing time were Peaky Blinders, Sex Education, Downton Abbey, The Crown and The Last Kingdom.

A separate 2022 study, by the Council of Europe's Audiovisual Observatory, showed that British films and shows drew as much as 30% of streamers' investment in original European content that year, with Germany and France lagging behind in their ability to capture funding.

"The European audiovisual industry has been in decline for decades, but the emergence of video-on-demand platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime has exacerbated the situation and increased the share of American films and series," said Emmanuel Maurel, a French Socialist MEP.

While Maurel did not explicitly call for Britain to be excluded from the quota, he said the criteria for British-American co-productions needed to be tightened. "British works account for one-third of the 30% quota in the platforms' catalogues," he said. "A problem worsened by the fact that the majority of British productions are American co-productions."

We had to fight hard to be heard, Spain players say after boycott

Ashifa Kassam
Madrid

Spain's female footballers have suffered decades of "systemic discrimination", two of the country's leading stars said yesterday as they addressed the crisis at the heart of the game.

Speaking on the eve of a Nations League match in Sweden, the Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas told reporters: "We had to fight very hard to be heard. For decades, we had detected systemic discrimination against women's football."

Her remarks came a month after Spain's World Cup win was overshadowed by an unsolicited kiss on Jenni Hermoso by the country's former football chief Luis Rubiales.

"What our colleague Jenni went through cannot be tolerated," Putellas said. "Football is a reflection of our society and we didn't want to set a precedent by brushing aside a situation like this."

The unsolicited kiss laid bare the players' longstanding struggle for equality, a battle that took a fresh twist this week after 15 players from the World Cup-winning squad were called up, despite their decision to boycott the team until changes were made to the federation leadership.

Hours of confusion followed as the players consulted on the potential consequences of continuing their boycott. Amid reports that the players could face fines of up to €30,000 (£26,000) or be banned from appearing for their clubs, all of them turned up for training.

Putellas's fellow World Cup winner Irene Paredes said: "We didn't want to come. We were forced to come. We came angrily but we came."

In the early hours of Wednesday, the government said that all but two of the 23 players who had been called up would end their boycott after the federation promised "immediate and profound changes". The meeting marked a turning point, said Paredes.



▲ Alexia Putellas spoke out after the World Cup Rubiales 'kiss' scandal

"We made the decision to stay, not because we are comfortable with the situation and the way that we've been called up but because we believe that this is what we have to do to move forward with the agreements."

The players' decision was also prompted by concerns that the under-23 team would have to be called up in their absence, she said. "It's passing a bomb on to people who might have less experience and it could get more complicated."

Paredes added: "We're tired, we understand that things are improving but there is still no light at the end of the tunnel. We hope that this can be a turning point for people to look at … and we can eradicate these types of situations."

Chair of Fox and News Corp steps back after 70 years building empire

Continued *from page 1*

of the Fox and News Corp boards of directors, leadership teams, and all the shareholders who have benefited from his hard work, I congratulate my father on his remarkable 70-year career.

"We thank him for his vision, his pioneering spirit, his steadfast determination, and the enduring legacy he leaves to the companies he founded and countless people he has impacted."

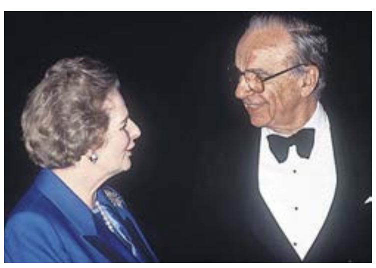
The handover comes at a time of uncertainty in a media landscape that Murdoch dominated for so long. Fox is in a competition with much larger and better resourced broadcasters as Americans are swapping cable television for streamed entertainment, while News Corp, owner of the Times and the Sun newspapers in the UK, is battling for revenues as print sales fall away and advertising migrates to social media platforms.

Murdoch has faced numerous challenges and setbacks, from a victorious confrontation with London's powerful print unions in the 1980s, to the inglorious closure of his best-selling News of the World tabloid in 2011 after the phone-hacking scandal.

The Fox founder's latest blow came five months ago when his news network paid $787m (£635m) to settle a defamation suit brought by voting equipment company Dominion, which charged that Fox had knowingly broadcast false allegations that it was involved in a plot to steal the 2020 election. Fox still faces a $2.7bn defamation suit filed by Smartmatic, a global election technology company.

Fox News forced out Tucker Carlson, its highest rated host, after the settlement. Carlson has claimed his ousting was part of the settlement, a claim both Fox and Dominion deny.

The past two years have been tumultuous for Murdoch. As well as those huge lawsuits, he announced he was divorcing his fourth wife, the supermodel Jerry Hall. A hard-hitting Vanity Fair report detailed a series of health problems, including a fall on a yacht in January 2018, leaving him close to death.



Margaret Thatcher in 1991 with Rupert Murdoch, who backed her

In April this year, Murdoch abruptly called off his engagement to Ann Lesley Smith, 66, a former conservative radio host, reportedly because of his discomfort with Smith's evangelical views. In his memo, Murdoch said: "Our companies are in robust health, as am I."

David Folkenflik, author of Murdoch's World: The Last of the Old Media Empires, said he had not heard of "anything about an immediate health crisis or scare but it doesn't mean that is not front of mind".

Folkenflik said the election scandal and the upcoming shareholder meetings for Fox and News Corp, parent company to its newspaper empire, may have led to the announcement's timing. "Rupert Murdoch once called the hacking scandal 'the humblest day of his life'," said Folkenflik. "But I think that by dint of his own personal involvement in the Dominion scandal, his own testimony, his own conscious decision not to intervene to prevent hosts from spreading very pernicious and utterly unfounded rumors of election fraud, that pulls him front and centre."

Murdoch's rise to become the most powerful media figure of his generation began when he inherited his father's interests in the Adelaide paper the News in 1952. By the 1980s, his newspaper empire spanned the globe. It went on to take over film studio Twentieth Century Fox in 1985, launch Sky Television in the UK in 1988, create publisher HarperCollins in 1990 and launch Fox News in 1996.

Murdoch has shaped generations of politicians across the globe, from backing Margaret Thatcher in the UK in her war against the unions to supporting Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton. "He didn't stay within the lanes at all," said Folkenflik. "He was happy to influence policy from the invasion of Iraq to Brexit to Donald Trump, for whom he had great contempt but whose support he wanted. That paid off for him."

The company has also been mired in scandal. Guardian investigations uncovered routine phone hacking by News Corp journalists. Prince Harry is suing the Sun's publisher over claims of unlawful information gathering. The trial is set to start in January.

After a long battle with his younger brother, James, Lachlan Murdoch emerged as heir apparent in 2019. But the longtime Murdoch watcher Paddy Manning claims in The Successor: The High-Stakes Life of Lachlan Murdoch, shareholders are not keen: "A Wall Street analyst who has covered the Murdoch business for decades … volunteers it would be 'fair to assume Lachlan gets fired the day Rupert dies'."



Success and scandal How Murdoch's influence grew beyond newspapers

Dan Sabbagh

Seventy-one years ago, Rupert Murdoch inherited a single newspaper in Adelaide and turned it into the English speaking world's most powerful news provider, driving the politics of three countries - Australia, the UK and the US - to the right and surviving a string of scandals and controversies until his retirement, aged 92.

An empire of newspapers

At 21, he took over the Adelaide News from his father, and by the 1960s had created Australia's largest newspaper group, whose titles made and broke the Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam in 1972. Turning his attention to Britain in the late 1960s, he bought the News of the World and launched the Sun, which rapidly became the bestselling title with a formula of sex, celebrity and sport.

The Sun, whose page three topless photographs lasted 44 years, turned from Labour to supporting Margaret Thatcher. Murdoch bought the Times titles with a supportive government in the background and fought the print unions at Wapping - before switching his support to Tony Blair, eagerly backing him over the invasion of Iraq and sticking with him long after the war had been revealed to be a disaster.

When the polls turned again, the papers, always with the proprietor making the final call, backed David Cameron, and then Brexit, a once marginal cause kept alive by a handful of rightwing papers.

An attempt to diversify into TV in Britain nearly bankrupted him, but eventually, after an enforced merger, he turned BSkyB around and it came to dominate football coverage in the way his newspaper group loomed over Westminster. Murdoch did not control all of Sky, but he tried to merge it with his newspapers in 2011 - until a major scandal intervened.

A billion-pound scandal

Two years of patient digging by the Guardian revealed that journalists at the News of the World had engaged in routine phone hacking, eavesdropping on private messages in pursuit of stories. But it took one story - the revelation of the hacking of the murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler's phone - to prompt a public and political outcry which led to Murdoch closing the Sunday tabloid, and to the end of the Sky merger.

More than £1bn was eventually paid in compensation to hacking victims, but a slow path to recovery followed, starting with Murdoch appearing before a select committee of MPs and insisting



▲ *Rupert Murdoch bought the Times and Sunday Times in 1981*
PHOTOGRAPH: JUDAH PASSOW/ THE GUARDIAN



▶ *Murdoch with News International CEO Rebekah Brooks in 2011, amid the phone-hacking scandal*
PHOTOGRAPH: FACUNDO ARRIZABALAGA/EPA/ SHUTTERSTOCK



◀ *The media tycoon with the then Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in Scotland in 2016*
PHOTOGRAPH: CARLO ALLEGRI/ REUTERS

that, while he knew nothing of phone hacking, it was "the most humble day of my life". Even a protester with an improvised custard pie could not cover the media mogul in shaving cream that day, beaten back by his then wife, Wendi Deng.

One former News of the World editor, Andy Coulson, went to prison, but his favourite editor, Rebekah Brooks, came back as chief executive. A Sunday tabloid was relaunched, and private meetings with Boris Johnson followed, including on the day the then prime minister signalled his intention to break the hung parliament by calling a general election in September 2019.



▼ *Murdoch and the model Jerry Hall at a service to celebrate their marriage in 2016*
PHOTOGRAPH: PETER NICHOLLS/REUTERS

The emergence of Fox
Nevertheless, Britain had lost some its lustre for Murdoch. The proprietor had relocated to New York in 1974, but it was a long time before he recorded his first business success there: the launch of the Fox television network in 1986, a fourth US national broadcaster that it was said the market could not accommodate.

Fox News followed in 1996, led by Roger Ailes, a conservative political consultant who had helped Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan to election victories. However, 20 years later it emerged that the Murdoch ally had been a sexual predator - 20 women led by the US broadcaster Gretchen Carlson made a sexual assault and harassment complaint that finally led to his ousting.

By then the channel had become the most profitable business unit at Murdoch's News Corporation, eclipsing rivals CNN and MSNBC. Executives were quick to call the disputed 2000 presidential election early for George W Bush despite the uncertainty in Florida, forcing other networks to follow and creating a decisive momentum for the Republican in an election that it is still not certain he won.

A relationship with Donald Trump
During the Barack Obama years, the Fox News conservatism went further, seemingly unable to deal with the presence of a black Democrat in the White House. The president was described as "a racist" by one presenter, Glenn Beck, but the station was nevertheless repeatedly endorsed by Murdoch, who said in 2010 he was "proud of Roger Ailes".

The high point of Murdoch's political influence came with the surprise election of the populist Donald Trump to the White House in 2016. Murdoch had never been particularly close to a US president before - "What's Rupert like? I never met him," George W Bush had once asked Blair.

But with Trump, he was able to call through to advise the inexperienced occupant of the White House, and it was said in 2017 that the two men spoke "now almost every day". It was a personal lobbying technique first honed in the UK with Thatcher, Blair, Cameron and Johnson, involving visits to No 10 by the back door.

There was time for one final disaster. Trump's extremism cost him the 2020 election, although he refused to concede, running a series of desperate attempts to argue the vote had somehow been rigged. Fox News and its presenters went all-in to support him, including backing bizarre and false allegations that Dominion, a voting equipment company, was involved in a plot to steal the election.

Dominion brought a libel action, and Fox was eventually forced to pay $787.5m to settle a defamation lawsuit before a six-week trial. Internal Fox emails showed that company insiders knew the voter fraud claims were false, including one from Murdoch himself, who said Trump's insistence he had won the election was "pretty much a crime".

It was a pattern of commercial success and political scandal that had been seen before. But with his controlling share of the media empire he largely created, Murdoch has, in the end, been able to step back at a moment of his own choosing - and much later than any ordinary chief executive could have done.

Lachlan Murdoch Chosen successor may struggle to hold father's empire together

Ed Pilkington
Dominic Rushe

After years of speculation, Rupert Murdoch has finally revealed his chosen successor. The keys of his global media empire, including the role of chairman of both Fox Corp and News Corp, have been handed to his eldest son, Lachlan.

Lachlan Murdoch, 52, gains sole control of a media group that has reshaped the media landscape across continents and radically altered politics in the UK, US and Australia. The move is the fulfillment of a promise first indicated in 2019, when the elder Murdoch named Lachlan as heir to his business.

"This is Lachlan's best chance to prove to investors and his family that he is the best option for the future," said David Folkenflik, NPR's media correspondent and author of Murdoch's World: The Last of the Old Media Empires. But he warned that it remained uncertain whether the successor could hold the empire together.

"Investors were willing to give a Rupert discount for years - but that was Rupert. Nobody puts that degree of faith in Lachlan, even as he's made some decent bets."

Born in London and raised in the US, Lachlan has been a dominant but elusive figure within the Murdoch family. His first job within the firm was at the age of 18, and four years later he was running his first newspaper in Queensland, Australia, with the national title the Australian falling under his purview the following year.

By the age of 34, he was the third most powerful executive in News Corp with control over several Fox TV franchises in the US and the New York Post. But he displayed an ability to confound media watchers when in 2005 he unexpectedly stepped aside, following a dispute with the then Fox News supremo, Roger Ailes, in which his father sided against him.

Lachlan went on to spend the next decade in the Murdoch wilderness, returning to Australia with his Australian wife, Sarah, and son (he has since had two more children). There he founded a private investment firm, Illyria, and developed his own media portfolio.



▲ *Rupert Murdoch with his sons James (right) and Lachlan (left), who has emerged as his successor* PHOTOGRAPH: KARWAI TANG/WIRE IMAGE

Lachlan returned to the family fold in 2014, following lobbying by his father, earning himself headlines labelling him the "prodigal son". His return put him back on the ascendancy, eclipsing the status of his more moderate and middle-of-the-road brother James and sisters Elisabeth and Prudence.

After a slice of the Murdoch empire, 21st Century Fox, was sold to Disney in 2019, Lachlan was named chairman and CEO of Fox Corporation.

Lachlan has a style of leadership more aligned to that of his father. Yet those who know him say it would be wrong to pigeonhole Lachlan as a Maga warrior. According to the writer Michael Wolff in his new book The Fall: The End of Fox News and the Murdoch Dynasty, during the 2016 presidential campaign Lachlan kept toilet paper printed with Donald Trump's face in his house and told friends his family had cried when Trump was victorious.

When it comes to dealing with assailants, Lachlan has proved to be a noble successor to his combative father. The results, however, have not always been happy.

Last month he was forced to pay more than A$1.3m (£680,000) in legal fees to the Australian company Private Media after he abandoned a defamation suit against its outlet Crikey. It had called him an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the 6 January 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol.

Since then, relations between Trump and the Murdochs have cooled, with Fox News reflecting that. But as the new supremo at the helm of an enduringly powerful media empire, Lachlan will have the hyper-sensitive task of steering the network through the 2024 presidential election with Trump the likely Republican nominee.

That, on top of a difficult economic climate for media companies, poses the biggest question: is Rupert Murdoch's settling of the succession on Lachlan a gift or a poisoned chalice?

UK operation
Questions over son's commitment to Britain

Jim Waterson
Mark Sweney

Rupert Murdoch's decision to put his son Lachlan in sole charge of his media business was met with surprise at his company's London headquarters.

Two questions are being asked: is Lachlan committed to the company's British media outlets, ranging from the Sun to the Times to TalkTV? And is Rupert truly relinquishing hands-on control - or is this a legal technicality?

Kelvin MacKenzie, a former Sun editor, predicted change for some of the British outlets but that the News UK chief executive, Rebekah Brooks, would be safe. "If I were working for TalkTV I'd be calling up GB News and asking for any jobs as a teaboy," he said. "And if I was on Times Radio I'd be looking at the job shop. But Rebekah will be fine."

MacKenzie warned his former colleagues in London to be wary of Lachlan in the longer term, claiming he would invest elsewhere. "He doesn't give a fuck about the UK," MacKenzie said.



▲ *TalkTV has low ratings and could be abandoned by Lachlan Murdoch, who is said to have little interest in the UK* PHOTOGRAPH: UNPIXS/TALKTV

One immediate question is whether News UK will remain interesting in buying the Telegraph and the Spectator, two rightwing titles due to be auctioned next month. Rupert coveted the weekly Spectator for its cachet in rightwing circles. It is expected the company will still bid - suggesting Rupert remains in control.

One of the differences between Lachlan and his father is a cultural connection to Britain. Rupert studied at Oxford then returned to the UK from Australia in the 1960s to found a new media empire in London, building up a stable of papers including the Times, the Sun and the News of the World. His tabloids produced the cash to build a satellite TV business - and ultimately led to a shift into the more profitable US business.

Lachlan does not have the same roots in the UK. The new sole chairman has been focused on US operations, overseeing businesses such as the highly profitable Fox News from Sydney after his family relocated from Los Angeles.

Responding to suggestions that Lachlan had rarely been seen in London, a News UK spokesperson said he spent a week in the UK in June when the company's board visited for a scheduled meeting.

In recent years Rupert was often seen on the newsroom floor and was known for taking an active interest in the stories and political positioning of the Sun and the Times, especially during the pandemic, which he spent in an Oxfordshire mansion with his now ex-wife Jerry Hall. It was there he signed a eye-wateringly expensive deal with Piers Morgan to launch TalkTV, a channel that averaged just 8,000 viewers on Tuesday and has been repeatedly trounced in the ratings by the nimbler and more extreme GB News.

MacKenzie said the transition announced yesterday showed Rupert knew when to exit a deal, such as when he offloaded Sky and other major assets in 2018 at the peak of the market. But he laughed at Murdoch's decision to appoint himself "chairman emeritus", suggesting his former employer had mocked such titles in the past.

He recalled being in Murdoch's office during the 1980s, asking why the then Sunday Times editor, Frank Giles, had been given the title "editor emeritus". "I asked: 'What does that mean?' Murdoch said: 'It means he's not the fucking editor of the Sunday Times.'"

To complicate matters, appointing Lachlan as sole chair does not mean the Murdoch family succession is settled. Rupert still controls the family trust that owns most of the shares of News Corporation and Fox, enabling him to push through the formal transition of power.

But when Rupert dies the family trust will be split between his first four children - meaning Lachlan could have to strike a deal with his siblings to remain in charge. Lachlan is partly estranged from James, his former co-chief executive, who has openly criticised the family business's support for Donald Trump and climate change denial. As a result Lachlan's future could rely on a deal with Elisabeth and his half-sister Prudence.

For his part, Rupert has made clear he will remain very much involved, telling staff: "I will be watching our broadcasts with a critical eye, reading our newspapers and websites and books with much interest, and reaching out to you with thoughts, ideas and advice."

Five Bulgarians in UK charged with spying for Russia

Dan Sabbagh
Defence and security editor

Five Bulgarians living in the UK have been charged by the Crown Prosecution Service, accused of being engaged in a conspiracy to spy for Russia between August 2020 and February this year.

The three men and two women, aged between 29 and 45, are, the CPS says, accused of "conspiring to collect information intended to be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy".

Orlin Roussev, 45, from Great Yarmouth, and Bizer Dzhambazov, 41, and Katrin Ivanova, 31, both from Harrow, west London, will appear in Westminster magistrates court on 26 September for an initial hearing.

They will be joined by Ivan Stoyanov, 31, from Greenford, west London, and Vanya Gaberova, 29, from Churchway, north-west London. All five have been charged with offences contrary to section 1 of the Criminal Law Act 1977.

Roussev, Dzhambazov and Ivanova were previously charged with "possession of false identity documents with improper intention" in February, news of which emerged in August.

Prosecutions for espionage in British courts are rare, with cases of spying by foreign nationals often dealt with through expulsions. However relations between the UK and Russia have deteriorated sharply since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine in February last year.

There have been several high-profile Russian plots in recent years, including the murder of the Russian dissident Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 and the attempted murder in 2018 of the Russian defector Sergei Skripal.

Roussev, Dzhambazov and Ivanova have lived in the UK for several years, working in a variety of jobs. Internet searches show that Roussev previously held technical jobs, describing him in 2009 as a network engineer and software developer.

Roussev's LinkedIn profile did not feature a photograph. It said he is the owner of a now-dissolved artificial intelligence company, NewGenTech Ltd. He describes himself as a former adviser to Bulgaria's energy ministry and has recently been living at a seaside guesthouse in Great Yarmouth.

Dzhambazov is described as a driver for hospitals. His Facebook page lists no friends. It features several videos of nightclubs and parties. A live stream from 2018 appears to show him teaching English to a group of mature Bulgarian students.

Ivanova describes herself on LinkedIn as a laboratory assistant for a private health business. In a Facebook video for the Bulgarian Social Platform she gives advice on how to obtain basic UK qualifications. Topics include citizenship, employment and an introduction to "British values".

Roussev, Dzhambazov and Ivanova also worked for electoral commissions in London that facilitate voting in Bulgarian elections for citizens living abroad, according to Bulgarian state documents online.

The prosecutions follow an investigation by the Metropolitan police's Counter Terrorism Command, which is also responsible for investigating espionage and hostile state activity.

Nick Price, the head of the CPS's special crime and counter-terrorism division, said: "Orlin Roussev, 45, Bizer Dzhambazov, 41, Katrin Ivanova, 31, Ivan Stoyanov, 31, and Vanya Gaberova, 29, will be charged with conspiring to collect information intended to be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy for a purpose prejudicial to the safety and interest of the state between 30 August 2020 and 8 February 2023."



▲ *Left to right: Orlin Roussev, Katrin Ivanova and Bizer Dzhambazov will appear in court on 26 September*



◀ *The painting, which has been bought by a private collector, shows the same cottage that appears in The Hay Wain*

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS GEORGE

'Lost' painting by Constable discovered in Guernsey sells for £200,000

Steven Morris

A "lost" painting by John Constable found hanging on the wall of a terrace house in Guernsey has been sold at auction for £200,000, almost double the guide price.

The oil on canvas sketch, showing a different view of a farm cottage that features in one of his most celebrated works, is thought to have been done in situ in 1814. It shows the rear of Willy Lott's house, which appears in Constable's 1821 masterpiece The Hay Wain.

It was auctioned amid huge excitement at Martel Maides Auctions in St Peter Port.

After fierce bidding, it was bought by an anonymous private collector based in Guernsey so is expected to remain on the island, but it may disappear from public view again.

Jonathan Voak, a paintings specialist at the auction house, said: "It was a terrific result comparing it with the estimate of between £80,000 and £120,000.

"There was a great atmosphere in the sale room. Multiple telephone bidders and lots of people in the room who wanted to see it being sold. The interest has been phenomenal.

"It's an anonymous bidder but the picture will be staying in Guernsey. It will go into a private collection here."

He said lots of people had relished the chance to see it over the last few weeks. "It's had a good old airing and I think people will be glad to hear it's going to stay in Guernsey."

The whereabouts of the sketch was unknown for 44 years, its location last recorded in 1979 when it appeared in an Italian scholarly publication listing Constable's works.

Voak said: "The painting was found among a large number of items that came from an old terraced house in Guernsey. It was first seen by a member of our team hanging in a dark corner of the dining room.

"That was some years ago and at that time it was certainly not thought to be a genuine Constable. It subsequently came to MMA when the owner died as part of the deceased estate."

The auction house says the sketch, which also shows a figure cutting logs, had a "firm provenance" stretching back as far as the 19th century when it was owned by Constable's grandson Hugh Golding Constable, who sold it to the fine art dealers Leggatt Brothers.

It almost certainly featured at a Leggatt Brothers exhibition in London in November 1899, the first to be devoted solely to Constable's work.

When painting in Suffolk in the early part of his career, Constable regularly made oil sketches in the open air. Willy Lott was a tenant farmer who lived in Flatford next to the land he farmed. For Constable, the house became emblematic of the rural way of life.

Carbon in ocean of Jupiter moon – and perhaps life

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

The vast subsurface ocean of Jupiter's moon Europa contains carbon, one of the crucial ingredients for life, scientists have discovered.

The observations, by the James Webb space telescope, indicate that carbon dioxide ice on the moon's surface originated from the salty ocean beneath a 10-mile-thick crust of ice.

Although the findings do not answer the question of whether alien life is lurking in the cold, gloomy depths, they add weight to the view that Europa's ocean could be the most promising place in the solar system to look for it.

"This is a big deal and I am very excited by it," said Dr Christopher Glein, a geochemist at Southwest Research Institute, Texas, and co-author of the study.

"We don't know yet if life is actually present in Europa's ocean. But, this new finding adds evidence to the case that Europa's ocean would be a good bet for hosting extant life."

Hypothetical lifeforms would have to contend with some extreme conditions including surface temperatures that rarely exceed -140C (-220F) and incoming radiation from Jupiter.

The potential habitability of Europa's ocean depends on its chemistry, including the abundance of biologically essential elements such as carbon. Previous research has identified the presence of solid CO_2 ice on Europa's surface, but it was not clear whether this had been spewed up by the subsurface ocean or had been delivered by meteorite impacts.

The James Webb telescope used near-infrared observations to map the distribution of CO_2 on Europa's surface. This showed a hotspot of CO_2 in Tara Regio, a 700 sq mile region of so-called "chaos terrain". Here the surface is dominated by glacial cracks and icy ridges, formed as blocks of ice have been forced to the surface.

"The discovery of carbon dioxide in salt-rich regions of Europa's ice shell indicates that the CO_2 is coming from the ocean below," said Kevin Hand, an astrobiologist at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and co-author of the research.

Hand described the finding as "critical". "Life as we know it loves to eat and breathe carbon dioxide."

10
Thickness, in miles, of the ice over Europa's ocean. The study suggests the ocean could host extant life

Campaigners plan series of legal challenges to PM's U-turn on green policies

Continued from page 1

is generally better," he said of policies to switch to electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Michael Bloss, a German MEP with the Greens, told the Guardian: "Rishi Sunak is becoming the leader of the fossil backlash. He is making the UK a climate villain and destroying its international reputation as a climate leader. These policies are destructive for the planet, which is already boiling, and they will be negative for the UK's economy."

Javi López, a Spanish MEP with the centre-left group, said it was a "suicidal decision".

Tim Crosland, an ex-barrister and director of the campaign group Plan B, which is not involved in the legal challenge, said the chances that the government could be taken to court were high. "This is very judicial-review-able. There has already been a review of net zero which the government lost and their plans were ruled unlawful. Now, instead of improving its plans, it has done the opposite, so from a legal prospective this can certainly be challenged."

Tom Burke, a veteran adviser to governments and co-founder of the environmental thinktank E3G, said legal challenges would have been foreseen by the prime minister, and might be part of his plan.

"They want to generate outrage, like protests from Extinction Rebellion," he said. "They will use legal challenges as an excuse to say the judicial processes must be reformed."

Ministers, including the home secretary, Suella Braverman, have made vitriolic attacks on "leftie" and "activist" lawyers, whom they accuse of using legal processes to subvert government aims. In Burke's view, they might welcome the opportunity to launch similar, politically divisive attacks over net zero.

Political insiders believe the purpose of Sunak's change of tack is to drive a "green wedge" between the Conservatives and Labour. Isaac Levido, his strategy guru, has pushed the line that the prime minister is "saving hard-pressed families from unacceptable costs" of green policies, while Labour would pile them on.

Undeterred by the torrent of criticism, from business, civil society, scientists and international observers, Sunak vowed to press ahead with the rollbacks. He told the BBC's Today programme yesterday: "I'm very happy to have opinions and advice from everybody, and everyone's entitled to their view. We're very confident - being in government, with all the information at our disposal - that we are on track to hit all our targets."

Communications from the Conservative Campaign Headquarters yesterday suggested the party was also seeking to use recommendations by the CCC as a line of attack. In an email headed "questions to Labour on net zero", it gave journalists a list of CCC recommendations including road taxes, flight taxes and carbon taxes as "questions to answer" that should be posed to Labour.

Sunak insisted that his plans would save money for households and that he was still committed to the UK's 2050 net zero. But experts warned that many aspects of the plans were likely to add to costs for consumers.

For instance, private renters will pay £1bn a year more in energy bills because of the scrapping of proposals to make landlords upgrade insulation, according to the Social Market Foundation. Pushing back the deadline for ending sales of new petrol and diesel cars will also cost consumers money, as electric vehicles save £5,000 to £8,000 in fuel costs over their lifetime, the thinktank said.

Though many of the changes will not have to pass through parliament, one may face a vote.

The delay of new petrol car sales to 2035 will be done through an affirmative statutory instrument. Some of the Conservative MPs who have voiced concern at Sunak's plans may choose to vote against it. However, any Tory rebellion may be small. Several self-identified "green Tories" have welcomed Sunak's plans.

Additional reporting **Helena Horton**

The No 10 team shaping Tory election strategy

Rishi Sunak has a band of loyal advisers who have stayed with him since his days as chancellor. But the power dynamic in No 10 has shifted with the arrival of some new strategists who will shape the prime minister's approach to the next election.

The chief of staff
Liam Booth-Smith started as part of Boris Johnson's team in No 10, having served as a former policy adviser during Johnson's Foreign Office days. He was sent to Sunak's Treasury as part of a newly formed "joint economic unit" within Downing Street that was set up by Dominic Cummings so that No 10 could keep a close eye on the chancellor. But Booth-Smith prospered under Sunak and moved with him into No 10 to become his chief of staff. He recently told aides to resign if they did not think the Tories could win the next election.

The election guru
Isaac Levido, a former protege of Lynton Crosby, ran the Conservatives' 2019 election campaign and has been spending an increasing amount of time working for Sunak. Over the summer, he was heavily involved in the work around Sunak's U-turn on net zero targets.

The political brain
Oliver Dowden, the deputy prime minister, is a full member of Sunak's inner circle. He helped run Sunak's leadership campaign and is relentlessly focused on the political aspect of his boss's premiership. One of the few very long-serving old hands in Sunak's operation.

The policy wonks
Eleanor Shawcross, Sunak's head of policy, is a longstanding Tory adviser who previously worked in George Osborne's Treasury. A donor of £20,000 to Sunak's leadership campaign under her married name, Eleanor Wolfson, she is a calm and intellectual presence within the team.

The deputies
Will Tanner and Rupert Yorke are second in command to Booth-Smith, with Tanner on the policy side and Yorke on political duties. Tanner is a former thinktanker, who helped found the centre-right operation Onward, which specialises in thinking and research about the "red wall". Yorke was brought with Sunak from his days in the Treasury.

The thinker
James Forsyth - a close friend of Sunak who was best man at his wedding, the former political editor of the Spectator is officially political secretary.

The strategists
Jamie Njoku-Goodwin and Adam Atashzai are full of energy and tasked with sharpening Sunak's political narrative. Njoku-Goodwin is a former housemate of Booth-Smith. Atashzai is a veteran of David Cameron's Downing Street.

The comms boss
Nerissa Chesterfield, Sunak's director of communications, was promoted to the job after the unexpected departure of Amber de Botton, a former TV news producer. Chesterfield is another Sunak loyalist after serving as his press adviser in the Treasury
Rowena Mason



'We've done the right thing'

Despite chaotic leak, some Tories signal their approval

Pippa Crerar and Kiran Stacey

Downing Street expected a backlash after Rishi Sunak announced that he was pushing back some of the government's key commitments for reaching net zero; in fact, they wanted it.

"The purpose of the speech was to create dividing lines with Labour," said a No 10 insider. "The fight is the point." What they didn't expect was for the speech to be leaked 72 hours early, and chaos to ensue.

When the BBC broke the story on Tuesday, "sheer bloody panic" broke out in No 10 at the furious response from some businesses, environmental groups and some high-profile, green-minded Tories.

But despite the initial explosive response, after Sunak's speech several Tory MPs said they felt "quite comfortable" with the changes. "I don't know why people were so irate," said one. "The net zero 2050 target hasn't changed. We'll still get there."

They welcomed what they described as Sunak's "grown up" approach to the issue. "People like politicians with principles and we haven't had one leading the party for a while," they said.

A second said the slowing down of the government's commitments on boilers and insulation had gone down "reasonably well" with their constituents, and they thought that the consumer focus would poll well with key voters who had gone off the Tories. Aides have spent weeks plotting the prime minister's reset, which began with Wednesday's speech and will continue with a series of policy announcements



◀ Rishi Sunak with agriculture and animal science students Kate Watson (right) and Ruby Holland during a visit to Writtle University College near Chelmsford, Essex, yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: ALASTAIR GRANT/PA

in the weeks to come. One senior Conservative said: "The rest of these are going to be just as ambitious as what we set out this week." Another added: "Rishi has spent the last year tidying up other people's mess, so he hasn't been able to be the prime minister he wanted to be until now."

But Tory MPs are divided on whether the prime minister's new approach will be successful. "I'm sceptical that the big ideas Rishi is going to announce are actually going to be that big for people in the real world. There's no political space for it," said one.

Government sources said they were happy about the way in which the U-turns had been received, especially after the prime minister's appearance on the BBC's Today programme yesterday morning. "The feeling is good because we've done the right thing," said one.

And despite Sunak's insistence that his speech was about policy and not politics, his advisers acknowledge the importance of political concerns in shaping what he said.

"There's an election round the corner so obviously that's his focus," said one Tory insider. "But if he'd taken over straight after Boris, rather than having to tidy up after Liz, we'd have heard about all of this a year ago. It's been on the cards for a while."

Others are less convinced that the political strategy will work. "If it's supposed to be a dividing line with Labour, it's not a very effective one," said one MP. "The explosive response shows that it's going to be tough for us to handle if we decide to make an issue of it."

Beneath the surface in Downing Street there is some unease about how the announcement was handled, especially given the strength of the business backlash. The chair of Ford UK warned the reversal would undermine the government's "ambition, commitment and consistency", while the chief executive of the energy supplier E.On said it risked leaving people "living in cold and draughty homes".



▲ Sunak delivers the statement on net zero in No 10 on Wednesday

Conservative officials believe the response would have been more muted had companies waited until they had heard the prime minister's speech before responding.

"The leak meant we couldn't manage the reaction," said one Sunak ally. "I don't think Ford UK would have put out that statement if they had heard the speech first."

But in fact the business reaction underlined a split which already existed in Downing Street between those who believe the prime minister should present himself as sober and prime ministerial, and those who want him to take a more combative tone, even if it alienates some natural allies. "If you're going to make a logical argument for doing this, stick with that, don't be political," one Tory insider said.

Several sources told the Guardian that Sunak personally insisted that he wants "change" to be the theme of the policy reset more broadly. He said the word 31 times during Wednesday afternoon, more than almost any other in the speech.

One Conservative said: "He knows that if the next election is Labour versus the Tories, Labour wins. If it is change versus the Tories, Labour wins. If it is change with them or change with us, we might just stand a chance."

Sketch
John Crace



Sunak's bold new plan for the climate crisis? Wait until 2047 then press the panic button

A night's sleep had done nothing for Rishi Sunak's mood. The prime minister dislikes being challenged at the best of times. He has the entitled demeanour of someone convinced of his own brilliance, for whom the idea of getting something wrong is a category error. Who can't understand why anyone might question him. And now he had to face the BBC's Nick Robinson in a 20-minute interview on the Today programme to defend his climate crisis speech. It was the last thing he wanted.

Robinson began by observing they were sitting in the Thatcher Room at Downing Street and that Margaret Thatcher had taken climate change very seriously. Sunak, meanwhile, had chosen not to go to the UN general assembly and was busy watering down the UK's efforts to combat global heating.

Almost immediately you could hear the irritation in Sunak's voice as he began to talk over Robinson. He wasn't watering anything down. He had made that clear. Why didn't everyone just listen to what he had said? More to the point, why didn't everyone just take him at his word instead of picking holes? Here was the thing. He, the Great RishGPT, had come up with the bold and, if he might say so himself, extremely brave idea that the country could have its cake and eat it. Yes, he knew this might not be popular - the dishonesty meter flickered off the scale at this point - but he had worked out that the UK could meet its net zero targets by not meeting its net zero targets.

Brilliant. What everyone had to realise was there was no point in getting worked up about 2050 targets in the short and medium term. Much the best thing was to wait until 2047 and panic. And if the scientists hadn't come up with planet-saving technology by then, we'd all be dead anyway. Best to live and let live now and not worry.

Sunak wasn't watering anything down, he'd made that clear. Why didn't everyone take him at his word instead of picking holes?

Besides which, the UK was well ahead of the rest of the world in decarbonising, so we would be doing other countries a favour if we slowed down a bit. We owed it not just to the planet but to the French and Germans as well. The first time Rish! has found any positives in aligning with the EU post-Brexit. Mostly, though, people just had to believe you could water down your commitments without watering down your commitments.

Robinson clearly didn't accept a word of this and kept pressing Sunak on the sheer cynicism of the doublethink involved. This was all nonsense, the presenter said. By now Rish! was on the brink of implosion. "I make no apologies for trying a new type of politics," Sunak said. We were on the brink of a new era. One where honesty could triumph.

By now, Robbo could barely contain himself. Honesty? It was all a pre-election con. That's why the Tories had sent out attack cards minutes after the speech. Only they had promised to abandon green policies - such as the Seven Deadly Bins, a meat tax and car sharing - that had never existed.

That's not true, said Rish!, the drawl ramped up an octave. They might have existed so therefore they in a sense existed. And while he was about it, he was going to ban people from killing their grandparents if they became ill. Had Labour promised that? No! Therefore Labour was on the side of killing old people. What did Keir Starmer have to say about that?

SAMSUNG

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▼ *Range Rover bodies undergoing checks in the paint shop at Jaguar Land Rover's factory in Solihull*
PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

Carmakers demand clarity as Sunak U-turn sows confusion

Gwyn Topham
Transport correspondent

Carmakers in the UK will still have to sell electric vehicles from 1 January or face fines, despite Rishi Sunak's U-turn on banning new petrol and diesel vehicles, under plans that are expected to be confirmed by ministers this week.

Manufacturers are calling for clarity and support, as the decision to press ahead with a mandate on car sales appears to clash with plans outlined on Wednesday by the prime minister, who said he would push back the date by which consumers will have to buy electric vehicles (EVs) by five years to 2035.

More than 20% of each manufacturer's new cars sold in 2024 must be zero-emission or they will potentially face fines of £15,000 a vehicle, under the targets proposed in a government consultation this year.

Ministers may decide to dilute the requirements but industry leaders have been told plans for some level of sales target are expected to be confirmed this week. It comes despite the prime minister's decision to upend important green policies including by scrapping the 2030 deadline for sales of new combustion engine cars.

The U-turn on 2030 has angered and perplexed much of the industry, which has been working towards the transition to electric but now faces further uncertainty over investment and a delay that could suppress demand for several years.

Ford criticised the change and warned it would undermine the move to electric, although Jaguar Land Rover said the move was pragmatic and brought the UK into line with other countries.

Mike Hawes, the chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), said: "[The industry's] commitment to a zero-emission new car and van market remains unchanged" adding that consumers needed encouragement to buy more than ever. He called for "a package of attractive incentives and measures to accelerate charging infrastructure to give consumers the confidence to switch".

The SMMT had warned this week that the end of incentives such as grants for electric cars for private buyers was undermining mass market demand, with the growth in EVs as a share of all new UK car sales slowing to about 16%, while most sales were to corporate buyers only.

Details of the mandate remain unclear despite the imminent start date, with the government yet to respond to its public consultation on the proposals, which closed in May.

A response could come by the end of the week, according to industry sources. Under current plans, the proportion of EVs must be at least 22% in 2024, rising to 80% by 2030 and would be 100% by 2035, when sales of hybrid cars would also be prohibited. Manufacturers have called for loopholes in the system, including trading quotas or buying credits, to allow more leeway for individual firms in the transition.

Criticism continued over Sunak's decision to defer the ban on new petrol and diesel sales, affecting the charging sector as well as manufacturers, and uniting industry and environmental groups.

Robert Llewellyn, the founder of the Fully Charged Show, an online EV news channel, said: "The UK car industry is unified behind the need to accelerate the battery electric vehicle market in the UK. Any dilution of the mandate will have the opposite effect on adoption in the UK."

Maria Bengtsson, the electric vehicle lead at the consultants EY UK, said a potential delay to the mandate could buy time for some manufacturers but would "mean frustration for key players who have already made significant investments and changes in anticipation of the original 2024 deadline".

Silviya Barrett, from the Campaign for Better Transport, said: "Delaying the 2030 phase out of new petrol and diesel vehicles gets rid of a target the government was already on track to meet and that the motor industry widely agrees is not only achievable, but very necessary."

Sally Foote, the UK managing director of the car-buying platform Carwow, said people would want clarity, support and an assurance that the goalposts would not move again.

The Department for Transport was approached for comment.

Seven deadly bins

Rishi Sunak's supposed scrapping of some green measures were ridiculed by critics who said they were never a reality in the first place – and on social media one took on a life of its own.

"You boy, which of the seven bins is it this week?" read the caption above an image of Scrooge in A Christmas Carol – in a tweet lampooning the prime minister's claim that he had spared people from being forced to recycle using seven bins.

Another post used an image from an encounter Sunak had with a homeless person at a soup kitchen. "Yes I scrapped the meat tax. Seven bins? Not on my watch mate. Compulsory badger racing also cancelled," read the caption.
Ben Quinn



Ebenezer Scrooge

Air pollution
Europe has moral duty to tackle issue – WHO official

Matthew Taylor
Pamela Duncan
Ajit Niranjan

Politicians across Europe have a moral responsibility to urgently tackle the continent's dangerously polluted air, according to Maria Neira, the director of the World Health Organization's department of environment, climate change and health.

A Guardian investigation revealed this week that Europe is facing a severe public health crisis, with almost everyone on the continent living in areas with dangerous levels of air pollution.

It found that 98% of people live in areas that exceed WHO guidelines for PM2.5 – tiny particulates that are linked to 400,000 deaths a year. Almost two-thirds of people live with pollution that is twice the WHO standard.

Neira said politicians must act swiftly to reduce the scale and severity of pollution.

"As a medical doctor, I cannot resist the temptation to remind people that this is about strokes, this is about heart disease, this is about asthma, this is about lung cancer, diabetes, low birth weight, preterm births, cognitive decline," she said. "We need to remind people that any time you breathe, you are breathing something toxic into your body which is having a devastating impact."

She said it would not be acceptable for 98% of Europeans to be supplied with dangerously polluted water, and the same should be true for the air they breathe.

"People say our guidelines are very strict and very ambitious. But I don't see ambition in proposing something that will make so many people less sick … Having the knowledge we have [on the health impacts of air pollution], I think there is a clear and absolute moral responsibility."

Last week the European parliament voted to adopt the WHO guidelines on PM2.5, but not until 2035. Neira welcomed the vote, but added: "We strongly urge countries to act swiftly, recognising that any shift in air quality levels will have a direct impact on public health, climate and the environment. Delaying these crucial measures will have severe and immediate consequences for people's wellbeing and the planet."

Javi López, a Spanish MEP with the centre-left group that led a push in the European parliament to adopt the WHO guidelines, said the Guardian investigation was "proof that pollution is a visible pandemic in Europe".

He said: "A discussion about not only health, but … about inequalities across Europe – between member states, but also social discussion between areas and classes – should be a top priority for administrations."

King calls for new entente cordiale to tackle climate crisis

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

King Charles has told French parliamentarians that Britain and France have a shared responsibility to protect democracy in Europe, ensure the triumph of Ukraine and tackle the "existential challenge" of the climate crisis.

In a speech to lawmakers in the upper house of parliament yesterday, the king spoke of Russia's "unjustified aggression" in invading Ukraine 18 months ago, and said France and the UK must stand together in the face of these "horrifying events", adding: "Together we are unwavering in our determination that Ukraine will triumph."

He proposed a new "entente for sustainability" amid the climate crisis. "Just as we stand together against military aggression, so must we strive together to protect the world from our most existential challenge of all: that of global warming, climate change and the catastrophic destruction of nature," he said.

"Together, our potential is limitless," Charles told the senate in French, in what was the first speech by a British monarch in a French parliament chamber.

"That's why we must cherish and take care of our entente cordiale. For future generations, so it becomes an entente for sustainability to tackle more efficiently the global urgency in terms of climate and diversity," he said. French senators and MPs gave the king a long ovation.

> *'Together we must strive to protect the world from our most existential challenge'*
>
> **King Charles III**
> *Speech to French senate*

After the speech Charles visited the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, home to the Stade de France, which is being used for the Rugby World Cup and next year's Olympics. He met residents and young athletes and visited its medieval basilica.

The king was presented with a shirt from the football team Paris Saint-Germain bearing his name and the number three. He also rejoined Queen Camilla and Brigitte Macron, who briefly played table tennis while visiting a sports centre. On the Île de la Cité on the Seine, Charles - a keen gardener - toured a flower market named after Queen Elizabeth II.

Accompanied by Macron and his wife, the king and queen were given a presentation on the renovation of Notre Dame after the catastrophic fire that partially destroyed it in April 2019. Nearly 1,000 people are working to restore the cathedral, which dates back to the 12th century.

The royalse could not enter the building for safety reasons, but spoke to workers, dozens of whom applauded and took pictures from the higher floors. Charles had written in an emotional message to Macron after the fire that he was "utterly heartbroken", calling Notre Dame "one of the greatest architectural achievements of western





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civilisation". Camilla and Brigitte Macron launched a new Franco-British literary prize, which will be awarded from 2024. The king was later to attend a climate and biodiversity financing conference before a formal farewell from Macron at the Elysée Palace.

Today, the final day of the visit, will be spent in Bordeaux, where Charles and Camilla will tour an organic vineyard and meet emergency workers and communities affected by the 2022 wildfires. The king has used his time in France again urge stronger ties between the two countries. At a lavish banquet at the Palace of Versailles on Wednesday night, he had said in a toast that it was "incumbent upon us all to reinvigorate our friendship to ensure it is fit for the challenge of this, the 21st century".

The king's three-day visit to France is seen as the "soft power" follow-up to Rishi Sunak's drive to repair the badly damaged Paris-London relationship at a crucial Franco-British summit in March. It confirms a reset of the British-French relationship after the near-total collapse in trust and the ill-feeling and resentment of the Boris Johnson years.

◀ *Queen Camilla and Brigitte Macron briefly played table tennis during the royal couple's visit to a sports centre in Paris yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: HANNAH MCKAY/REUTERS

Labour wouldn't 'want to diverge' from the EU, says Starmer

Ben Quinn
Political correspondent

Keir Starmer has gone further than before in outlining his vision of a future UK relationship with the EU, saying Labour didn't "want to diverge" - in comments that were immediately seized on by the Conservatives.

The Labour leader was speaking at an event in Canada bringing together liberal and centre-left politicians, where he said that "most of the conflict" since Brexit had arisen because the UK "wants to diverge and do different things to the rest of our EU partners".

"Actually we don't want to diverge, we don't want to lower standards, we don't want to rip up environmental standards, standards for people that work, food standards and all the rest of it," he said during a question and answer session in Montreal.

The comments, which Labour said were not a new statement of policy, came as Starmer outlined last week how a future UK-EU relationship would look, prompting surprise from some in his own party who had come to regard Brexit as dangerous territory.

"I think those kinds of comments about not wanting to diverge will worry a lot of people that what he really wants to do is to unpick Brexit," the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, told LBC radio. The foreign secretary, James Cleverly, tweeted: "Keir voted remain. Then he backed a second referendum. Then he didn't. Now he wants to rejoin the EU in all but name."

Starmer's comments were made at an event alongside the Norwegian prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, in answer to a question by John McTernan, a former senior Downing Street aide to Tony Blair. McTernan said he was interested to hear the views from both Starmer and the PM of Norway, another country outside the EU but with a close relationship.



▲ *Keir Starmer's EU comments have surprised some in his own party*



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Ex-soldier Khalife pleads not guilty to escaping from Wandsworth jail

PA Media

Daniel Khalife, a former soldier, has pleaded not guilty to escaping from HMP Wandsworth, where he was on remand after being charged with terrorism offences earlier this year. The 21-year-old appeared at the Old Bailey in London via video link from HMP Belmarsh to deny the charge. Khalife said: "I am not guilty."

He is accused of escaping from prison on 6 September by allegedly strapping himself to the underside of a food delivery vehicle. Khalife was arrested on a canal towpath in west London at 10.41am on 9 September after being pulled off a push bike by a plainclothes counter-terrorism officer.

He had been in Wandsworth prison awaiting trial after allegedly planting a fake bomb at an RAF base and gathering information that might be useful to terrorists or enemies of the UK. He denied those charges at a previous hearing at the Old Bailey in July.

Mr Justice Jeremy Baker joined the charges and Khalife will be tried at Woolwich crown court on 13 November for all four offences.



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All fired up Natalie Armitage, a ceramicist, admires a piece called Red Dancer by the Russian artist Oxana Geets during the British Ceramics Biennial held in venues across Stoke-on-Trent, including All Saints church, Hanley.

PHOTOGRAPH: FABIO DE PAOLA/PA

Sheffield Utd footballer Maddy Cusack dies aged 27

Nadeem Badshah

Tributes have been paid to the Sheffield United footballer Maddy Cusack, who has died at the age of 27.

Cusack had played for the women's team since 2019, making more than 100 appearances. She also worked for the South Yorkshire club as a marketing executive. The cause of death has not been disclosed.

Stephen Bettis, Sheffield United's chief executive, said: "This is heartbreaking news for everyone at Bramall Lane. Maddy had a unique position of being part of a number of teams at Sheffield United and was popular with everyone that she came into contact with. Her personality and professionalism made her a credit to her family – she will be sadly missed. Whilst taking in the news and moving forward, the club will offer as much support as possible to Maddy's family, friends and colleagues."

The club, who play in the second tier of women's football, said in a statement on their website: "Discussions over suitable tributes and celebrating Maddy's life will continue privately. The club and Maddy's family would appreciate a period of privacy and will not comment further at this sad time."

Cusack was the first player to reach 100 appearances for the club and had just started her sixth season. She took on an off-field role in 2021, having previously worked at the Sheffield United Community Foundation.

Sue Campbell, the FA's director of women's football, said: "We are all devastated to learn about the passing of Maddy Cusack. On behalf of the FA, the Lionesses, the Women's Super League and the Women's Championship, our thoughts and deepest condolences are with Maddy's family, friends, teammates and everyone at Sheffield United."

Leah Williamson, the England captain, wrote: "Sending all my love and condolences to Maddy's family at this awful time."



▲ *Maddy Cusack made more than 100 appearances for Sheffield United*

A trio of Pauls and only two women on the Booker shortlist

Ella Creamer

The Booker prize shortlist is weighted towards male writers for the first time in eight years - and half of the shortlisted authors are called Paul.

Four of the six shortlist places went to novels by men: Prophet Song by Paul Lynch, The Bee Sting by Paul Murray, This Other Eden by Paul Harding, and If I Survive You by Jonathan Escoffery. Two books by women, Study for Obedience by Sarah Bernstein and Western Lane by Chetna Maroo, complete the list. None of the six authors have been shortlisted before.

Murray, an Irish novelist, was shortlisted for The Bee Sting, a tragicomedy about an Irish family in crisis. The judging panel, chaired by the Canadian novelist Esi Edugyan, said Murray's fourth novel was "funny, sad and truthful" and that the characters, with "myriad flaws and problems", were unforgettable.

Lynch, also Irish, has made the list with Prophet Song, a "propulsive, unsparing and terribly moving" book warning of "the precarity of democratic ideals", said the judges. The novel, set in Dublin, is a dystopian tale of Ireland under a tyrannical government.

> *'It was the work, rather than whether they were called Paul'*
>
> **Robert Webb**
> *Booker prize judge*

The US author Harding won the Pulitzer prize for fiction in 2010 for his book Tinkers. This Other Eden is inspired by the true story of an island off the coast of Maine that became one of the first racially integrated towns in the US north-east. The judges said it was rare to "encounter a work of historical fiction that is at once so lyrical and so empathetic".

If I Survive You is the US writer Escoffery's debut, a collection of eight linked stories following a Jamaican family navigating racism and a financial crisis in Miami. "All of life is here in unflinching detail: the fragility of existence, the American dream and the road not taken," said the judges.

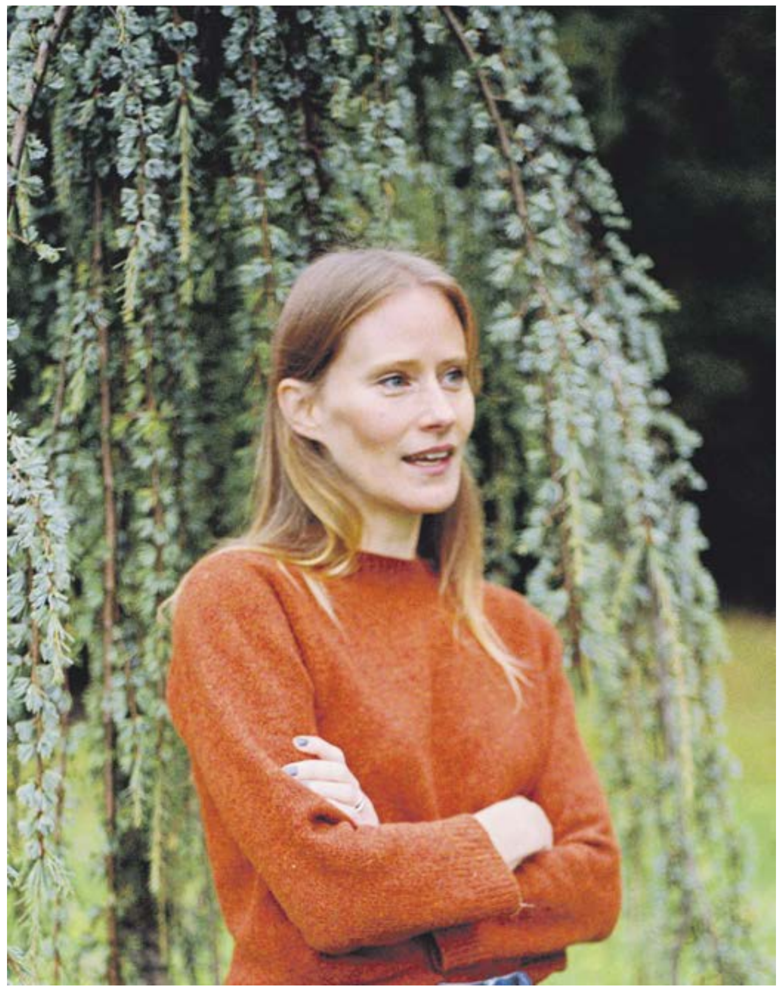
Maroo, also a debut novelist, was the only British writer to make the list, for Western Lane, a "mesmerising" novel "about how silence can reverberate within a family in the aftermath of grief".

Bernstein's Study for Obedience is about a young woman who travels to an unspecified remote northern country to be housekeeper for her brother. The judges called the book a "stirring meditation on survival and a pointed critique of the demonisation of the outsider".

The six finalists were selected from 13 longlisted titles. All the shortlisted authors receive £2,500.

Edugyan said that "it's the strength and the quality of the work that landed these writers" on the shortlist. The actor Robert Webb, also a judge, added that "it was very much the work that we were concentrating on, rather than whether or not they were called Paul".

The winner of the prize will be announced on 26 November.



▲ Sarah Bernstein is nominated for Study for Obedience PHOTOGRAPH: ALICE MEIKLE



▲ Jonathan Escoffery



▲ Paul Lynch



▲ Paul Murray



▲ Chetna Maroo



▲ Paul Harding



Life in care can lead to eightfold rise in falling foul of law – study

Daniel Lavelle
Simon Hattenstone

The largest study of care experience and the youth justice system in England has revealed that children who have lived in care are eight times as likely to have received a youth justice caution or conviction than those who have not.

Using data collated by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Education (DfE), the study monitored the experiences of almost 2.3 million children born in England between 1996 and 1999. Their data was recorded between the ages of 10 – the minimum age of criminal responsibility in England – and 17.

It revealed that 33% of care-experienced children received a youth justice caution or conviction, compared with 4% of those without care experience. This figure was higher for some care-experienced minority ethnic groups including black Caribbean (39%), mixed white and black Caribbean (42%), Travellers of Irish heritage (46%) and Gypsy/Roma (50%).

The study, led by Dr Katie Hunter, a lecturer in criminology at Manchester Metropolitan University, and supported by Lancaster University, was funded by Administrative Data Research UK. Of the children monitored, 2,241,250 did not have care experience and 50,070 did. Care-experienced people were 2% of the dataset but accounted for 15% of those with youth justice involvement and 32% of those who received a custodial sentence.

Nine per cent of black and mixed ethnicity care-experienced children received custodial sentences – almost twice as many as white care-experienced children. The proportion of those with no care experience who received a custodial sentence was less than 0.5%. Hunter said minority ethnic care-experienced children faced a "double whammy" of disadvantage.

Children with experience of care were far more likely to be "juvenile prolific offenders" – defined by the MoJ as individuals who have received four or more youth justice cautions or convictions. Care-experienced children with a criminal record had an average of seven cautions or convictions, compared with three for those without care experience, while those who identified as black and mixed ethnicity received on average eight and nine youth justice cautions or convictions respectively.

Children with a criminal record who had been in care were more than twice as likely to be given a custodial sentence than those who had not.

Indian and Pakistani children with care experience were least likely of all ethnic groups to have experience of the youth justice system (16%), but this was four times as high as children who had not experienced care.

Hunter pointed to a number of reasons why care-experienced children were more likely to have a criminal record and to be over-represented among prolific offenders: they are often criminalised for behaviour that would not result in a youth justice intervention if it had occurred in a non-care setting; they can face excessive surveillance; police can unfairly target certain categories of children, including those from broken families.

9%
The proportion of black children who had spent time living in care who received custodial sentences

Care-experienced children are also more likely to have mental health and drug problems and to struggle at school, all of which increase the likelihood of being criminalised.

Anne Longfield, the chair of the Commission on Young Lives and a former children's commissioner, said the figures were "shocking". She added: "Many of the systems that are supposed to protect and support our most vulnerable young people … are instead failing them. Without better investment in and reform of children's mental health services, children's social care, family support and the education system, we are writing off the life chances of thousands of young people before they even reach adulthood."

A DfE spokesperson said: "We have a national protocol in place on reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers, and are taking action on risk factors that can lead to criminal behaviour, including through our work to improve school attendance."



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A sunny spell for Frieze
Zak Ové's The Mothership Connection, 2021, at Frieze Sculpture in Regent's Park, London, which runs until 29 October. The future is a common theme in Ové's work, often through ideas of space travel and Afrofuturism.

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/ALAMY

BBC investigates claim Russell Brand flashed a woman in 2008

PA Media

The BBC is investigating a claim that Russell Brand flashed a woman before laughing about it on his radio show.

The incident allegedly took place in 2008, when the woman was working in the same building as the corporation's office in Los Angeles, BBC News reported. Minutes later, the comedian is said to have laughed as his co-presenter, Matt Morgan, said Brand "showed his willy to a lady". The woman was reportedly left "stunned and disgusted" by the encounter.

A BBC spokesperson said: "We're very sorry to hear of these allegations and we will look into them.

"We are conducting a review to look at allegations of this nature and if the woman who has shared her story is willing to speak to us, we would be very keen to hear from her and anyone else who may have information.

"A key part of the review is to understand what complaints were made at the time, if there was knowledge of Russell Brand's conduct while he worked on BBC radio, and what was done as a result.

Brand did not respond to a request for comment by PA.

He has been accused of rape, assault and emotional abuse between 2006 and 2013 – when he was at the height of his fame and working for the BBC and Channel 4 and starring in Hollywood films – after a joint investigation by the Times, the Sunday Times and Channel 4's Dispatches programme. Brand denies the allegations.

Channel 4 has announced an investigation into the presenter's time at its channels. It also said it had removed all content featuring Brand, while the BBC said it had reviewed content and "made a considered decision to remove some of it, having assessed that it now falls below public expectations".

YouTube, which hosts Brand's video channel, and the podcast platform Acast, where his Under the Skin show appears, have said he will not make money from advertisements on their sites and apps.

The remaining shows of Brand's Bipolarisation tour have been postponed. However, the rightwing video platform Rumble said the allegations have "nothing to do" with it.





In brief

Media

Video site rejects call to demonetise Brand

Rumble, a video-sharing platform used by Russell Brand, has accused a parliamentary committee of "deeply inappropriate" behaviour after it asked whether the site would suspend payments to the comedian.

Caroline Dinenage, the Conservative chair of the culture, media and sport committee, wrote to Rumble's chief executive, Chris Pavlovski, to express concern that Brand "may be able to profit from his content on the platform".

Rumble posted its response on X, formerly known as Twitter, claiming it was "deeply inappropriate and dangerous" of parliament to "attempt to control who is allowed to speak on our platform or to earn a living from doing so". Dinenage wrote to Rumble after YouTube announced on Tuesday that Brand would no longer receive advertising revenues from his videos.

In a public statement posted on X, Rumble called the letter "disturbing" and said parliament's demands were "deeply inappropriate and dangerous".

The video platform said: "Singling out an individual and demanding his ban is even more disturbing given the absence of any connection between the allegations and his content on Rumble."
Dan Milmo and Hibaq Farah



Pooh and the pooch
A dog called Carmen joins Winnie the Pooh and friends in a new set of tales by Jane Riordan, illustrated by Mark Burgess.

PHOTOGRAPH: TRUSTEES OF THE SHEPARD TRUST/PA

Education

Covid impact on pupil mental health revealed

Secondary school pupils in the UK experienced significantly higher rates of depression, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and overall worse mental wellbeing during the Covid pandemic, research shows.

Cases of depression among secondary school pupils aged 11 to 13 rose by 8.5% during the pandemic compared with a 0.3% increase for the same cohort prior to Covid, according to a comparative study by researchers at the University of Oxford's psychiatry department.

The researchers found that girls' mental health deteriorated more than that of boys during the pandemic. Girls were also more likely to find the return to full-time schooling difficult.

The students who were most resilient during the pandemic were those with plenty of social interaction and support, including a supportive school environment, good relationships at home and a friend to turn to during lockdowns. The study showed that even partial school attendance during lockdown put students in a better place to adjust to returning to school full-time than no attendance at all, the study found.

Willem Kuyken, the study's lead author, said: "We can see that full school closures should be avoided to protect the adjustment of young people." **Rachel Hall**

Courts

Kaba's family see officer charged with murder

Family members of Chris Kaba, who died after being shot by a police marksman last year, were in court yesterday to see the officer charged with murder.

Kaba, 24, died in Streatham Hill, south London, in September 2022 after he was shot through a car windscreen. His family watched from the public gallery at Westminster magistrates court yesterday as the Metropolitan police officer, named only as NX121, was led into the dock.

In the moments before the shooting Kaba had collided with a marked police car. The officer fired one shot and hit Kaba in the head. An application for anonymity was granted to protect their identity.

The recorder of London, Mark Lucraft KC, said a plea and trial preparation hearing would be listed for 1 December, with a possible trial date of 9 September next year. The officer was released on bail.
PA Media



▲ *Campaigners outside court*

You've got to have Faith

Museum explores 6,000 years of belief in Britain

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

Early visitors to a dramatic, immersive work by Mat Collishaw have talked of it prompting emotional and cathartic responses - which is music to the ears of the artist. "That would be the ultimate reward," he said. "If someone can take some sort of solace from the work then that really is amazing."

Collishaw's work features a blue iris burning, accompanied by a choral soundtrack. The iris is engulfed by flames but never consumed by them, which visitors may, the artist hopes, imagine is the moment before the death of Christ or a martyr.

It is part of a unique museum opening in October in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, exploring 6,000 years of faith in Britain. More than 250 objects are on display including the Binchester ring, one of the earliest examples of Christian symbolism found in Britain. Upstairs there are works exploring themes of faith by contemporary artists including the Singh twins, the late Khadija Saye, who died in the Grenfell Tower fire; and Collishaw, one of the original YBAs. His presence in a museum of faith is particularly interesting because he was brought up as a Dawn Christadelphian - a sect that believes the Bible is the only truth.

It was "hardcore", he said at a preview of the museum yesterday. No Christmas. Definitely no television, which he would secretly watch in other people's houses while on his paper round. To many it may sound terrible, but it was a happy childhood, he said.

"In retrospect I was much happier than I would have been if I was watching Tiswas. I think I got more from reading about Nebuchadnezzar than I would have got from Chris Tarrant."

His upbringing has affected his art subconsciously, he said. "A lot of the work I do draws on historical ideas and I'm pretty sure that's because I was brought up with this heavy sense of history."

The museum is another piece in a jigsaw known as the Auckland Project, a cultural regeneration project in a "left-behind" post-industrial northern town driven by the money and passion of Jonathan Ruffer, a wealthy asset manager.

In addition, the town has a "Prado of the north" Spanish art gallery, a mining art gallery and a castle with a spectacular series of paintings by Francisco de Zurbarán, of Jacob and his 12 sons.

The Faith Museum has been 10 years in the planning, with "many challenges along the way".

About two-thirds of the objects are loans, including objects from the British Museum and the V&A. There are treasures such as the Bodleian bowl, a short-term loan from the Ashmolean in Oxford. The enigmatic 13th-century copper alloy bowl is a rare survivor from medieval England's Jewish population, who were expelled by Edward I in 1290.

More modern objects include a Salvation Army bonnet from the early 1900s, which is more like a helmet and needed to be, given the hostility that "soldiers" were met with when they preached and played their loud instruments.

Ruffer hopes the museum might help the "faith hesitant" on their journey and also have a surprising effect on people "who think of themselves as being very mature, all their theology is right, they do all the things that mark them out as aristocrats of faith. Those people I want to unsettle."

The Faith Museum opens on 7 October





▲ *A blue iris, embodying the idea of faith, is engulfed by flames. Below, the 13th-century Bodleian bowl is a short-term loan from the Ashmolean in Oxford*
PHOTOGRAPHS: GARY CALTON/ THE GUARDIAN

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Johnson to avoid censure over breaking rules with Daily Mail job

Ben Quinn
Political correspondent

Boris Johnson is to avoid censure for breaking the rules on ex-ministers taking up new jobs despite the government accepting he committed a breach over his job at the Daily Mail.

Oliver Dowden, the deputy prime minister, told the post-government appointments watchdog yesterthat it would be "disproportionate to undertake further action" other than acknowledging the breach.

Johnson committed a "clear breach" of rules by telling the advisory committee on business appointments (Acoba) he was becoming a Daily Mail columnist only half an hour before the public announcement, the watchdog said in June. The ministerial code states ministers must ensure no new appointments are announced or taken up before the committee has provided its advice.

In a letter to Acoba last month that has now been published, Dowden wrote: "The Cabinet Office accepts the committee's assessment and notes the risk surrounding media appointments are limited … I therefore also accept that it would disproportionate to undertake further action in these circumstances other than the public exchange of such correspondence (noting that there was a breach)."



▲ *Boris Johnson announced his new job before Acoba could advise on it*

The Mail unveiled Johnson in June and said his first column would appear at 5pm, only a day after a report found he had deliberately misled the Commons and had been part of a campaign to intimidate MPs who investigated him.



Schools should involve parents in child's social transition, NHS advises

Amelia Gentleman
Richard Adams

Schools should not allow gender-questioning children to "socially transition" without their parents' involvement, according to NHS training and guidance on how staff should respond to pupils exploring their gender identity.

The new online module published by NHS England represents the first national guidance on how to support children with gender-related questions or distress in education settings.

School leaders described the NHS guidance as helpful in contrast to the "vacuum" left by the government's failure to publish its long-overdue guidance, which Rishi Sunak had promised would be ready earlier this year.

NHS England said the training resources had been developed independently of the Department for Education and were not intended to influence policy. The material was put together because a need had been identified for additional guidance, a spokesperson said.

The course states: "Recently, there has been a rise in young people asking to make a social transition at school or college without the knowledge or involvement of their parents or carers."

It defines social transition as allowing a child to adopt a new gender and might involve a school agreeing to use the child's preferred name and pronoun, or authorising the use of different toilets and facilities.

The training module advises: "Supporting a social transition without the involvement of parents or carers can create complex difficulties within families and is not recommended.

"Secrets between parents or carers and their children are problematic and are likely to create further issues in the future." It adds: "The priorities of parents and carers should be held as central, so that decision-making is collaborative."

While organisations that advocate for transgender, non-binary and gender diverse children agree that families or carers should be closely involved in social transition, some argue that potential safeguarding concerns mean schools should be cautious about involving families by default.

The NHS's position aligns with reports of the government's draft guidance, which is said to advise that schools should inform parents and seek their consent to allow a child to socially transition. Some ministers and MPs have been pushing for a legal ban on children socially transitioning.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "It's helpful that the NHS is providing guidance as this is obviously a source of information in which educators can have a high degree of confidence in navigating this complex and sensitive territory."

"The frustration is that there continues to be a vacuum in terms of the official guidance that is supposed to be coming from the Department for Education."

The NHS England guidance restates the NHS's position, set out by the Cass review of gender identity services, that social transition is an "active intervention" rather than a "neutral act". Teachers with "significant concerns" about negative responses from parents should seek "safeguarding oversight" and "make referrals to additional support agencies if levels of conflict within the family seem high, cannot be resolved with your input, and are potentially harmful".

Topics are suggested for possible "supportive" discussions between teachers and children and their families to explore the pros and cons of social transition.

Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, told MPs in July that the government's own guidance for schools in England would be delayed to allow more time to consult lawyers, parents and teachers.

'The frustration is that there continues to be a vacuum in the DfE's guidance'

Geoff Barton
School leaders' union

Stage review

Sissay's take on Kafka fails to emerge from poetic chrysalis

Metamorphosis
Curve, Leicester
★★☆☆☆

Mark Fisher

It is linguistically playful, politically needling and gives the actors long speeches to sink their teeth into. But Lemn Sissay's version of the Franz Kafka novella is also low on narrative tension. It is more poetic than dramatic.

The playwright is initially drawn to the theme of transformation. While Gregor Samsa (Felipe Pacheco) is a fabric salesman, offering his customers reinvention through fashion, his sister Grete (Hannah Sinclair Robinson) is transitioning through adolescence, trying out catwalk poses and playing with her appearance. It is a fertile idea in a story about a man who turns into an insect, but one Sissay discards. Taking over is a view of Gregor as a manifestation of the ills of capitalism.

Like Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman, Gregor buckles under the pressure of a merciless market. On the face of it, his family reject him because of his appearance, but their real complaint is his economic inactivity. "Beggars can't be choosers," is the mantra of Gregor's father (Troy Glasgow), owning his exploitation like a badge of pride, with the apparent approval of Mrs Samsa (Louise Mai Newberry).

We may admire his agility, but have no time to empathise



From left, Troy Glasgow as Mr Samsa, Felipe Pacheco as Gregor and Joe Layton as the chief clerk
PHOTOGRAPH: TRISTRAM KENTON/THE GUARDIAN

As the insect-man, Pacheco writhes, convulses and stretches. But having hit a peak of terror early on, he has nowhere to go. We may admire his agility but have no time to empathise with his predicament before it consumes him.

There are times when Scott Graham's Frantic Assembly production, performed on Jon Bausor's set with its dreamily distorted angles and porous walls, seems less like a play than an art installation, abstractly riffing on the book. The director's physical-theatre techniques are good for providing expressionist angst, but too often pad out the material, to more than two hours.

In a script with more telling than showing, Gregor's family background becomes clear only in the second half, and the backward-looking material makes the direction of travel uncertain. All the same, some combination of Kafka's haunting tale and the tireless movement of Graham's production keeps a packed matinee audience of teenagers in rapt silence.

Until 23 September, then touring until 2 March

Autistic actors in pioneering play at Royal Court

Harriet Sherwood
Arts and culture correspondent

A play performed by a professional cast of actors who have learning disabilities or are autistic is to open at one of London's leading theatres tomorrow in a milestone for the arts sector.

Imposter 22, a darkly comic whodunnit, will run for three weeks on the main stage of the Royal Court in Sloane Square.

The play, by Molly Davies, has been five years in the making. Seven out of the eight-strong cast are actors with learning disabilities or autism who trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. They helped create the play with Davies, feeding in their experiences in workshops.

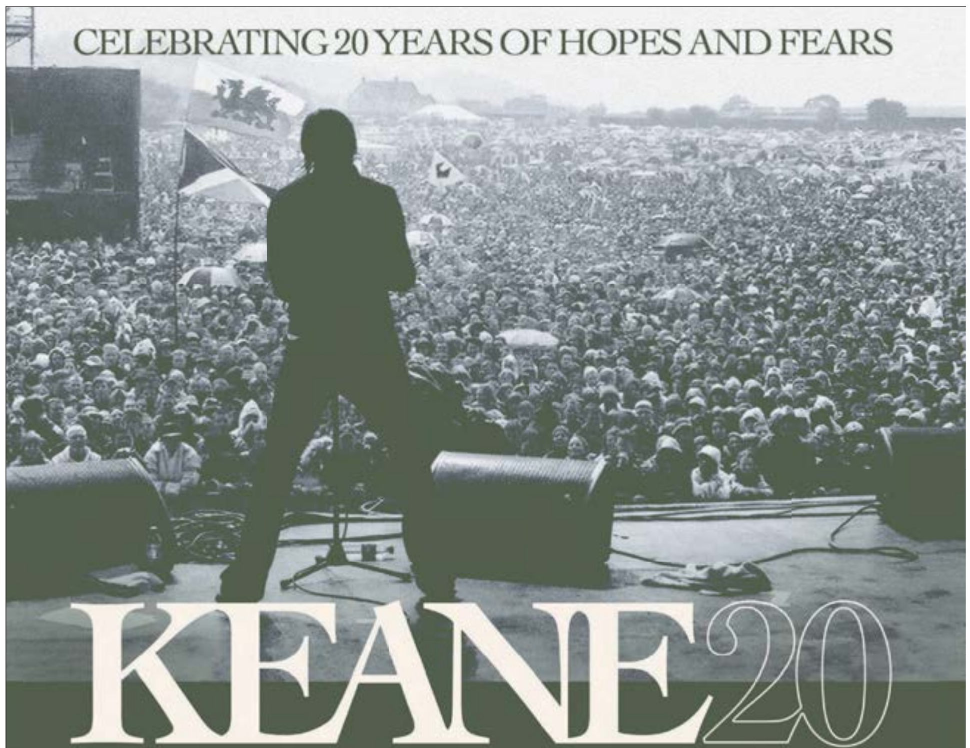
Charlene Salter, one of the cast, said: "You don't really see learning disabled and autistic people as role models on the stage and television. It is changing, but it needs to improve. There's so much talent out there."

Davies said the workshops with the cast were a source of "constant ideas that fed the play".

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Eyewitness





A hunter's birthday
Prokopiï, an Evenk hunter renowned throughout the far eastern Russian republic of Yakutia, celebrates his 60th birthday with his family in a restored wooden house rented for the occasion in Chochur Muran, an ethnographic complex near the city of Yakutsk. The image by Natalya Saprunova is part of Visa Pour L'Image, a leading festival of photojournalism that took place in Perpignan, France, this month. Her project focuses on the Evenks, an Indigenous people with centuries-old traditions of hunting and herding in the eastern forests of Siberia, and their role as the custodians of the resources of Yakutia.

PHOTOGRAPH: NATALYA SAPRUNOVA

World

Poland to end its weapons deliveries to Ukraine as grain dispute escalates

Shaun Walker *Warsaw*
Sam Jones

Poland, one of Ukraine's staunchest allies, has announced an end to its arms transfers to the country, a day after Volodymyr Zelenskiy accused Warsaw of playing into Russia's hands by banning Ukrainian grain imports.

Poland is one of Kyiv's main weapons suppliers and has been one of the loudest cheerleaders for the Ukrainian cause since the full-scale invasion began in February 2022, but relations have soured over recent days after a row over grain.

The argument has led to heated exchanges between the two countries on the sidelines of the UN general assembly, with the Polish president, Andrzej Duda, comparing Ukraine to "a drowning person clinging to anything available".

On Wednesday, the Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, said his country had decided to prioritise its own defence in the future. "We are no longer transferring weapons to Ukraine because we are now arming Poland with more modern weapons," Morawiecki said.

The announcement has largely rhetorical significance - the majority of available Polish military aid was transferred to Ukraine in the early months of the war, and there is no question of ending the use of Poland as a transit and repair hub for weapons supplies from other countries.

Yesterday the Warsaw government clarified the statement, saying Poland "is only carrying out previously agreed supplies of ammunition and armaments". Duda claimed the prime minister's words had been misinterpreted: "In my opinion, the prime minister meant that we won't be transferring to Ukraine the new weaponry that we're currently buying as we modernise the Polish army."

The largest amount of Ukrainian military support comes from the US, and Zelenskiy has been using his visit to New York and Washington to shore up support for continuing deliveries, as some Republicans begin to question the financial outlay on Ukraine. Last night Joe Biden announced a $325m (£264m) military aid package after talks with Zelenskiy at the White House.

The row comes as Poland prepares for closely fought parliamentary elections next month, with the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party keen to avoid losing support to a far-right challenger that has called for reducing support to its neighbour, amid growing reports of "Ukraine fatigue" among some Poles.

PiS also has strong support in farming regions, which are worried about falling grain prices after the surge in Ukrainian imports. Morawiecki said on Wednesday: "Of course we respect all of [Ukraine's] problems, but for us, the interests of our farmers are the most important thing."

The leader of the main opposition coalition, the former European Council president Donald Tusk, was quick to criticise the government, accusing PiS of "stabbing Ukraine in the back politically" for electoral purposes.

"The worst thing is that today this escalation, if it continues … both sides - Kyiv and Warsaw - are close to wasting what was a great opportunity for the entire region, for Poland and Ukraine: Polish-Ukrainian solidarity against Russian aggression, help for Ukraine to win the war with Russia, Polish-Ukrainian friendship and a rational, assertive policy when it comes to the burdens we bear," Tusk said.

The grain dispute came after the Russian invasion closed Black Sea shipping lanes and resulted in some Ukrainian grain being diverted overland through Europe.

On Wednesday, Zelenskiy used his speech to the UN general assembly to accuse some "friends" of acting in Russia's interests. "It's alarming to see how some in Europe play out solidarity in a political theatre - making a thriller from the grain," he said. "They may seem to play their own role but in fact they are helping set the stage to a Moscow actor."

Major cities hit by Russia

Ukraine has warned of a difficult winter ahead as cities from east to west were hit in Russia's largest wave of missile attacks in more than a month, killing at least three and wounding dozens.

Missiles fired at Kyiv, Kharkiv and the Lviv region caused power cuts in almost 400 locations. Russia's missile campaign last winter targeted civilian energy infrastructure when the weather was at its coldest. "Difficult months are ahead: soon Russia will attack again energy and critically important facilities," said Oleksiy Kuleba, deputy head of Kyiv's presidential office.
Lorenzo Tondo and Pjotr Sauer

Analysis
Shaun Walker

Support from Warsaw hit by electioneering

To hear Poland's president liken Ukraine to a drowning person and Ukraine's president say Poland is acting in Moscow's interests will be a shock to many. Poland was one of the few western countries whose ambassador stayed in Kyiv through the first days of the Russian invasion, and its president has been a frequent visitor to the Ukrainian capital. Early in the war, Poland welcomed more than 2 million refugees.

This all makes the intensity of the rhetoric in the rift over grain imports hard to understand, but it may have more to do with internal politics in Poland than with real hostility between the countries.

Polls suggest the parliamentary elections on 15 October will be extremely close, and the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party wants to boost its support. "This is primarily about the election and the motives are quite clear," said Wojciech Przybylski, the editor of Visegrad Insight. PiS hope to "flex a muscle with their key electoral groups", he said, including agricultural workers in the east affected by the influx of Ukrainian grain.

The nationalist PiS party is also facing a challenge from the far-right Confederation party, which advocates for focusing on Poland's internal issues. Although there are elements of "Ukraine fatigue" in Poland, PiS has to tread a careful line as most Poles are staunchly anti-Russian and believe Ukraine is also fighting for Poland's security.

Donald Tusk, the leader of the main opposition coalition, accused PiS of a "moral and geopolitical scandal of stabbing Ukraine in the back politically when they decide to fight on the Ukrainian front, just because it will be profitable for their campaign".

The rhetoric has hit such a level that the rift may leave a sour taste even if the grain issue alleviates. Duda will remain president even if the opposition win next month.

"How this develops will depend on the outcome of the elections, but it is likely to have a lasting effect on relations, whoever is in power," said Przybylski.



Awkward allies
The far-right Russians fighting on Kyiv's side



▲ *Russian Volunteer Corps recruits at a firing range near Kyiv. Many of the group's members have far-right views* PHOTOGRAPH: ALESSIO MAMO/THE GUARDIAN

'A kind of sexism'
Norway politicians in share trading scandal
Page 27



Reaching for the stars
Sweden aims high in Europe's space race
Page 29



◀ *Denis Nikitin, the head of the RDK, flanked by bodyguards. He was once a major figure on Russia's football hooliganism scene and built far-right links across Europe*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALESSIO MAMO/THE GUARDIAN

Shaun Walker
Kyiv

Denis Nikitin arrived for an interview at a Kyiv restaurant with a pistol strapped to his side and flanked by two armed bodyguards. It would not have been a surprising sight in wartime Ukraine but for one detail: Nikitin is Russian.

Before Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine last year, Nikitin was known as a notorious Russian nationalist who had built links between far-right groups across Europe and was once a major figure on Russia's football hooliganism scene. "If we had met 10 years ago on the outskirts of Luton we might have had a fight. But now I'm a grownup," he said, as the bodyguards glowered from a short distance away.

These days, Nikitin runs the Russian Volunteer Corps (RDK), a controversial unit of Russian citizens that fights alongside the Ukrainian army.

RDK, along with another group of Russians fighting on Kyiv's side, performed several cross-border raids this year, briefly seizing villages inside Russia before retreating back into Ukraine. The raids – captured in chaotic, high-energy videos posted online – provided a huge PR boost for Kyiv, showing that the Kremlin could not control Russia's borders and is vulnerable to partisan attacks.

Russia labelled RDK as terrorists and subjected Ukrainian cities to a heavier-than-usual bombardment of missiles in response.

Ukrainian officials suggest that after the full military defeat of Russia and the collapse of the Putin system, RDK and units like it could be part of a pro-Ukrainian force that marches into Russia, perhaps seizing permanent control of parts of Russian territory.

But RDK are complicated allies for Ukraine. Many of its members have far-right views. Nikitin, who grew up in Russia and Germany, has been banned from the Schengen zone since 2019 and has a reputation as one of Europe's most notorious neo-Nazis. He goes by the name White Rex, also the name of a brand of clothing he set up that uses far-right imagery.

He has lived in Kyiv since 2017, a year after he and other Russian hooligans clashed with England fans in Marseille. From Kyiv, Nikitin ran mixed martial arts competitions credited with bringing together far-right activists from across Europe.

The way Nikitin told it, he became more anti-Kremlin as the years went by. "We realised that immigrants are not the ultimate evil; our state is our enemy. We realised we have to fight the state," he said at the restaurant.

When Putin launched his full-scale assault on Ukraine, Nikitin got his chance to fight the Russian state for real. He called friends in the Ukrainian army and asked how he could help. What started as a few Russians in Kyiv informally helping out their Ukrainian friends turned into the nucleus of a battalion.

The first mission into Russia came in early March. "It was an intoxicating sensation, once we crossed the border for the first time … It was, like, on one hand, this is the Motherland but on the other hand, it's enemy land," he said.

He claimed his fighters had all taken "an extra last-resort grenade" in case of capture, aware that torture or worse would await them.

Nikitin speaks perfect English and is clearly enjoying his time in the limelight, but his jovial demeanour can change quickly. A German journalist who tracked down his relatives to ask about Nikitin's past "will pay for his work one day", he said. In a courtroom? "In a court, first. Let's see how it goes in court. Let's put it like that."

Nikitin also blames the media for exaggerating his notoriety. He denied ever using the phrase "white supremacist" and said he was only called a "neo-Nazi" because he was against "LGBTQ propaganda and cultural Marxism". But, pressed on his views about Nazi Germany, he said that although "genocide and gas chambers are bad, regardless of who does it", there was much he admired about the Third Reich. "I extremely like the culture, the style. I extremely favour the military," he said.

The restaurant where Nikitin arranged the meeting seemed an incongruous venue for such a discussion, as young Kyivites ordered Korean lunch sets. As he discoursed about the Third Reich over the periodic growl of a smoothie-making machine, two Scandinavian diplomats at the next table discussed strengthening democratic institutions and minority rights in Ukraine.

Nikitin broke off the interview for an hour to greet a woman who had come to see him. She was the sister of an RDK fighter who died on a mission into Russia, he said. He handed her a posthumous medal from the Ukrainian authorities, wrapped in a plastic bag.

Ukraine denies any official links with RDK and other groups of Russian fighters, but this is more a trollish parody of Russia's longstanding claim not to be behind "separatists" in eastern Ukraine than a serious denial. It is, after all, implausible that Ukraine would allow armed groups of Russians to roam the country without oversight and direction. The raids into Russia appeared to include US-supplied Humvees and other armoured vehicles.

Nikitin said RDK "can rely on Ukrainian intelligence, on the Ukrainian military infrastructure" while the fighters were inside Ukraine, but once they crossed into Russia, they were on their own.

Western governments have reportedly put pressure on the Ukrainian government to ensure military aid from the west is not used for missions inside Russia and does not end up in RDK hands.

One source close to Ukrainian intelligence said: "I know that our western partners are extremely unhappy when it comes to giving them weapons. But we are facing an existential question of war.

"It's unfortunate that they have those views, but what should we do? Obviously, the only people who are going to pick up a Kalashnikov and cross the border into Russia are, let's say, specific people."

There is a danger that by backing RDK, Kyiv feeds Russian propaganda tropes about Ukraine being a haven for Nazis, even if RDK make up a minuscule fraction of Ukraine's fighting forces, and even though there are more far-right people fighting on Russia's side. Some of them are Nikitin's former friends from the football hooligan scene. "Now they write me death threats. They call me traitor, I call them traitors. They say I betrayed our homeland. And I tell them they betrayed our idea," he said.

> *'They say I betrayed our homeland. And I tell them they betrayed our idea'*
>
> **Denis Nikitin**
> *Russian Volunteer Corps*

Ukrainian authorities prefer to focus on another unit of Russians, the Legion of Free Russia, which carried out the raids inside Russia jointly with RDK but does not have the same far-right baggage. They claim these battalions could have a major role in a post-Putin Russia.

"As soon as Russia properly loses the war, Putin's power vertical will collapse and it will turn out there are lots of private armies that will try to take control of various regions, it will be undoubtedly be a period of chaos … the Legion of Free Russia will be very capable of taking one or more Russian regions under control," said Mykhailo Podolyak, an aide to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Talk of permanent seizure of Russian territory sounds like fanciful thinking for now. RDK and the Legion of Free Russia decline to say how big they are, citing the requirements of military secrecy, but estimates suggest the number of Russian fighters in Ukraine can be counted in the hundreds rather than the thousands – hardly an invading force.

The group's funding comes mainly from private donations by Russian and Ukrainian supporters. One Russian businessman living in exile in Britain said he had helped coordinate fundraising for RDK, although he asked for anonymity to protect family members in Russia.

For now, Ukrainian authorities appear willing to turn a blind eye to RDK's ideological slant, believing the willingness to fight Putin's armies trumps any negative publicity. Not everyone agrees.

A western diplomat in Kyiv said boosting RDK could be a dangerous strategy for Ukraine. "I think giving these guys weapons is a very bad idea, and I really hope it doesn't backfire," they said.

Nikitin used a cinema metaphor to explain why he believed foreign governments should swallow their discomfort and back his group with weapons: "It was always easy in westerns – the cowboys who had white hats were the good guys, the cowboys who had black hats were the bad guys. But then came The Good, the Bad and the Ugly … where the bad guys are fighting the very bad guys. So, consider it like that: we're the bad guys, but we're doing good things."

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Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire 'is holding' as truce talks begin

Andrew Roth *Yerevan*
Pjotr Sauer

The Armenian prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, has said a ceasefire in the breakaway Armenian republic in Nagorno-Karabakh was largely being observed, as truce talks with Azerbaijan over the future of the region and its residents began.

Video published by Azerbaijani media showed the delegation from the self-styled Artsakh republic and Russian peacekeepers driving to the city of Yevlakh after a ceasefire was declared following a 24-hour Azerbaijani offensive that Baku claims has put it in full control of the disputed ethnic Armenian enclave.

Yesterday's talks ended without any public statements or sign of a breakthrough. Elchin Amirbekov, Azerbaijan's representative, said it was "difficult" to expect all problems between Azerbaijan and Karabakh Armenians to be settled in one meeting. Quoting the ethnic Armenians' representative, Russia's RIA news agency said no final agreements had been reached between the two sides. An adviser to the leader in Nagorno-Karabakh said ethnic Armenians would need security guarantees before giving up their weapons.

As part of the initial ceasefire agreement, ethnic Armenian forces agreed to disband.

Armenia has said it is not a party to the ceasefire or the negotiations. The country was defeated in a 44-day war with Azerbaijan in 2020 and Pashinyan has warned that Azerbaijan is seeking to drag Armenia into another conflict. In a separate address to his nation yesterday to mark the country's independence day, Pashinyan said Armenia needed to be "free of conflict" for the sake of its independence, without specifically mentioning Nagorno-Karabakh.



▲ *Armenians take refuge at a camp operated by Russian peacekeepers*

Thousands of protesters gathered on Wednesday evening to denounce the Armenian government's perceived failure to protect ethnic Armenians in Karabakh.

The talks will determine the fate of tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians in the disputed territories, who have endured war and a months-long blockade as they live in an enclave that is internationally recognised as Azerbaijani territory. Pashinyan said yesterday Armenia was prepared to accommodate refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh. Thousands of people have taken refuge in a camp operated by Russian peacekeepers, while many others fled to the airport of the regional capital, Stepanakert.

Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev, apologised in a phone call with Vladimir Putin yesterday for the death of Russian peacekeeping troops in Nagorno-Karabakh the previous day, the Kremlin said.

On Wednesday, Russia's defence ministry said several of its peacekeepers in Nagorno-Karabakh were killed when their car was shot at as they drove away from an observation post. Russian media reported one of those killed was Ivan Kovgan, the deputy commander of the peacekeeping contingent.

The Kremlin said that in the phone call with Aliyev, Putin highlighted the importance of safeguarding the security and rights of ethnic Armenians in the breakaway region.

The president of the European Council, Charles Michel, told Aliyev to protect the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region and "ensure full ceasefire and safe, dignified treatment by Azerbaijan of Karabakh Armenians".

"Their human rights and security need to be ensured. Access needed for immediate humanitarian assistance," Michel wrote on social media.

▼ *Erna Solberg, whose husband allegedly made 3,600 secret share deals while she was prime minister*
PHOTOGRAPH: HEIKO JUNGE/AP



Norwegian politicians urged to quit over husbands' shares

Miranda Bryant
Stockholm

The careers of two of Norway's most powerful female politicians are in the balance after their husbands were found to be secretly trading in shares.

In separate cases, the foreign minister, Anniken Huitfeldt, of the Labour party, and the Conservative party leader and former prime minister Erna Solberg are facing calls to resign. They both deny having known what their husbands were doing.

Among those calling for resignations were Rasmus Hansson, a Green party politician, who said the two women were damaging the reputation of Norwegian politics. "Walk now. Please," he wrote on Facebook, adding that if they refused to go, their parties should remove them.

During Solberg's two terms in office, from 2013 to 2021, her husband, Sindre Finnes, allegedly made more than 3,600 share deals, many of which would have disqualified her from the role. "I mean very clearly that I have responsibility, and I have explained why: I thought I had fulfilled my responsibility," Solberg, 62, said yesterday. "I had no reason to believe Sindre was deceiving me."

She said that if she were to become prime minister again – she is hoping to be the lead Conservative candidate in the 2025 election – her husband "cannot engage in share trading". She said yesterday that she was willing to continue as party leader but would leave the decision to her party.



▲ *Anniken Huitfeldt, a Labour party minister, has been backed by the PM*

> ***'I have responsibility … I had no reason to believe that Sindre was deceiving me'***
>
> **Erna Solberg**
> *Conservative leader*

Finnes has issued a statement through his lawyer, saying he had lied to his wife about his trading but claiming that he had never acted on inside information, which would have been a criminal offence.

Finnes' trading was revealed after Huitfeldt admitted that her husband, Ola Petter Flem, had traded shares in companies that her decisions could have affected. Huitfeldt, 53, was reprimanded by her government's legal department for failing to get to grips with her partner's financial activities. She should, she said, have "asked my husband what shares he he owned".

But since she did not know about the conflicts of interests, she said her decisions were still valid and she has been backed by the prime minister, her party leader, Jonas Gahr Støre.

Berit Aalborg, the political editor of the newspaper Vårt Land, blamed attention around the case on sexism.

"That would not have happened if it was the other way around. These men are being made fun of because they are men with powerful wives," she said. "We like to think we have a high degree of gender equality in Norway. But this is a kind of sexism."

Additional reporting **Agencies**

Saudi nuclear warning reduces chances of US cooperation deal

Julian Borger
Washington

The Saudi crown prince has confirmed his country would seek to acquire a nuclear arsenal if Iran developed one, throwing fresh doubt on a possible US-Saudi nuclear cooperation deal currently under negotiation.

Joe Biden's Democratic allies in the US Senate say his administration will face a tough battle for approval of a deal normalising Israeli-Saudi relations if it includes substantial nuclear cooperation with Riyadh, because of distrust of Saudi intentions.

Mohammed bin Salman has added weight to suspicions that an ostensibly civilian nuclear programme could be diverted to military purposes if Saudi Arabia felt under threat.

Questioned by Fox News, the crown prince said: "We are concerned of any country getting a nuclear weapon," adding that if Iran did successfully develop a weapon "we will have to get one". He gave a similar warning in 2018.

The Biden administration has worked hard on a Saudi-Israeli deal, which Prince Mohammed said was getting closer "every day". Any deal would involve US incentives: the Saudis want a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US, without the tough non-proliferation restrictions that normally accompany such deals, and formalised security guarantees.

According to diplomats, under the agreement Saudi Arabia would move towards diplomatic relations with Israel and resume funding of the Palestinian Authority, while Israel would be asked to make concessions to the Palestinians. The deal is aimed in part at restoring US credibility as a broker in the region, amid Chinese influence, but there are obstacles.

Diplomatic sources say the ailing King Salman made a rare intervention in state policy to insist the Palestinians be given tangible territorial benefits as a precondition of normalisation. "For us, the Palestinian issue is very important. We need to solve that part," Prince Mohammed said in the Fox interview. But any transfers of land to Palestinian control would be fiercely opposed by Israel's hard-right cabinet. Furthermore, formalised security guarantees are very hard to get through Congress, and resistance would be all the stronger in the Saudi case, in view of the kingdom's terrible human rights record.

Administration officials have told Congress they would prefer any deal to be concluded by the start of 2024, when the president's re-election campaign begins in earnest.

The state department declined to comment, but a senior administration official said on Wednesday: "Whatever is done regarding civil nuclear cooperation with Saudi Arabia or anybody else will meet stringent US non-proliferation standards."

India suspends visa service for Canadians as relations worsen in 'safe haven' row

Hannah Ellis-Petersen *Delhi*
Leyland Cecco *Toronto*

Relations between India and Canada further deteriorated yesterday, when Delhi announced it was suspending visa services for Canadians owing to "security threats" faced by its embassy and consulates in Canada.

BLS International, which runs the Indian visa offices in Canada, put a notice on its website stating that all visa services for Canadians were suspended until further notice, citing "operational reasons".

Arindam Bagchi, a spokesperson for India's foreign ministry, confirmed the suspension at a media briefing, referring to "the incitement to violence, the inaction by the Canadian authorities and the creation of an environment that disrupts the functioning of our high commission and consulates" as the reason.

India has long claimed Canada is providing safe haven for what it says are "terrorists" from the Khalistan movement, a Sikh independence group banned in India. Canada has the largest population of Sikhs outside their home state of Punjab.



▲ *Justin Trudeau and Narendra Modi in Delhi earlier this month*

"You are aware of the security threats being faced by our consulates in Canada," said Bagchi. "This has disrupted their normal functioning. Accordingly our high commission and consulate are temporarily unable to process visa applications. We will be reviewing the situation on a regular basis."

It is the latest retaliatory move by India's foreign ministry in response to the Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegation this week that there was "credible evidence" Delhi had been involved in the murder of the Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in June.

India rejected the allegations as "absurd" and in the aftermath the two countries have engaged in a tit-for-tat expulsion of top diplomats.

Bagchi spoke damningly yesterday of Canada as a place where "elements linked to organised crime, linked to terrorists, secessionists, or extremists who are operating freely, they are being politically condoned, they seem to have a free run".

Asked whether Delhi's reputation had been marred by the accusations of its role in the assassination of Nijjar, Bagchi said: "If there is any country that needs to look at this, it is Canada and its growing reputation as a safe haven for terrorists."

On Wednesday, India updated its travel advisory for Canada, warning its citizens in the country to take "extreme caution" owing to "growing anti-India activities". Canada's advisory for its nationals travelling to India warns of a "threat of terrorist attack throughout the country".

Anger in Sweden over ministers' plan to slash climate budget

Miranda Bryant
Stockholm

The Swedish government is facing a huge backlash – including threats of votes of no confidence against its climate minister – after slashing the country's climate budget while admitting that it will dramatically increase carbon emissions.

The minority-run coalition, which has been in power for just under a year, announced on Wednesday it would be cutting funding for climate and environmental measures next year by 259m kronor (£19m) and introducing tax cuts on petrol and diesel.

While long-term emissions are expected to decrease by 2045, the government is now expected to miss its 2030 transport targets.

By its own estimates, emissions will increase by 5.9m-9.8m tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents by 2030 as a consequence of government decisions made between 1 July 2022 and 1 July 2023.

The move has drawn comparisons to Britain, where Rishi Sunak this week also attracted condemnation after performing a major U-turn on Britain's climate commitments by pushing back the deadline for selling new petrol and diesel cars and the phasing out of gas boilers.

Since Swedish finance minister Elisabeth Svantesson's announcement, the government has faced criticism from other parties – including, sources have told the Guardian, from those within the ruling coalition.

Some commentators have suggested it could pull apart prime minister Ulf Kristersson's coalition.

Rickard Nordin, the climate and energy spokesperson for the opposition Centre party, condemned the climate cuts, which he said were unprecedented.

Along with other parties, he said, he would do what it takes to stop the budget and presented the government with an ultimatum, telling it if it did not deliver a climate action plan before Christmas, they would issue the climate and energy minister, the Liberal, Romina Pourmokhtari, with a motion of no confidence.

£19m
The amount by which the Swedish government will cut funding for its climate measures next year

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Ready for takeoff

Swedish launch site that aims to win Europe's next space race



Preparing a suborbital rocket at Esrange

Daniel Boffey
Esrange space centre, Sweden

First place is "nice but it's not necessary", says Stefan Gustafsson, a senior official at the Swedish Space Corporation (SSC), with a chortle. "Other actors are more aiming to be first. Naturally, I think we will be."

Gustafsson, 65, a former marathon canoeist with world championship medals to his name, is talking of the latest space race. A British rival, led by Virgin Orbit, has already spectacularly fallen by the wayside and the Swedes have every intention of winning.

Among the vast forests of pine and birch in the northernmost part of Sweden - 120 miles north of the Arctic Circle - lies the Esrange space centre, a cluster of isolated buildings, concrete launching pads and 30-plus large antennae dishes.

The understated base, a 40-minute drive east from the similarly unprepossessing mining town of Kiruna, has been operating here in the wilderness since 1966, contributing to the international wealth of scientific research by blasting "sounding" rockets into suborbit, launching large balloons into the stratosphere and picking up and processing data from above.

Once owned by the European Space and Research Organisation, rebadged in 1975 as the European Space Agency, it is today the property of the SSC, a company wholly owned by the Swedish state.

It has a worthy history in atmospheric, ionospheric and microgravity research, but it does not seem that exciting at first sight, and the small visitors centre is empty. The few members of staff on the base are working intensely, though, and diggers lumber stone round the secure zone in an effort to complete their tasks before the heavy winter snow falls. New launch pads are being finalised, complicated liquid-fuel handling systems are being prepared, and a giant two-hall hangar has been erected on the base's periphery.

This space centre is leading the pack in a fiercely competitive battle to be the first European base outside Russia to launch a satellite into orbit - an aim made possible by technological advances and the emergence of micro-rockets. Other frontrunners include the Andøya space centre in Norway and the UK's SaxaVord spaceport in Unst, Shetland, while Iceland, Portugal's Azores and Spain's Andalucía are among the rest.

The past 18 months in Ukraine have added urgency. Gustafsson, a vice-president for strategy at the SSC who held a senior role in the Swedish military, says: "One of the problems that was rapidly obvious after the start of the Ukraine war was the lack of launching capability for Europe, heavily dependent on Russia and Baikonur [the Russian launch base in Kazakhstan], and also technical collaboration between the European space agency and Russia. When the sanctions came in, we had a gap and still have a gap in launching capabilities. We really want to cover that gap."

At the same time, there has been a huge increase in the number of satellite launches globally. In 2022, there were an estimated 6,905 active satellites orbiting Earth - an increase of 2,105 on the previous year.

Until now, European actors seeking to launch satellites were dependent on Russia and the European spaceport in French Guiana on the north-eastern coast of South America. Europe's heavy air traffic and densely populated terrain traditionally offered few of the necessary conditions.

For the remains of its suborbital rockets floating to Earth on parachutes, the Esrange base has a landing zone of 2,000 sq miles nestled between Norway and Finland. It is barely inhabited, and the Sami reindeer herders who roam there are provided with bunkers for use during launches.

But in April, the Norwegian authorities issued an angry statement when an Esrange research rocket malfunctioned and landed in its territory.

"It was really not a danger for anyone," says Gustafsson. Until now, he says, a satellite-loaded rocket launching from Esrange has simply not been viable. The rocket would need to pass over Norway for 15 to 20 seconds with all the concomitant risks. That has all changed. "With the old-fashioned technology it could be a risk, with the new technology it is not at all," says Gustafsson. "It flies up there, over 100km and then goes away. There is less risk than an aeroplane crashing at an airport."

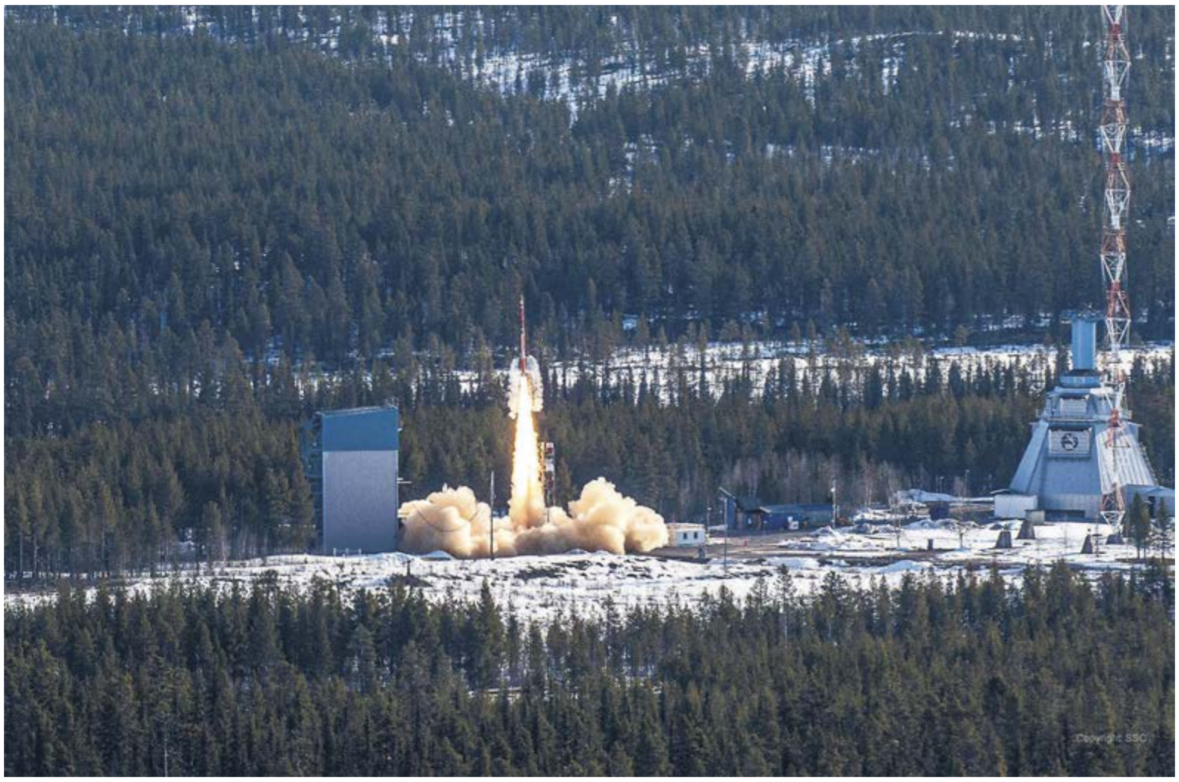
The Esrange space centre hopes to have its maiden launch by spring - but is not putting a date on it. It is waiting for the right rocket to be ready. A contract is in the pipeline with a Swedish provider. Clients will then provide the satellites, known as the payload.

"We could give the example of an airport," says Gustafsson. "A company owns the airport, and different airlines use it. It's the same here. But then, you can have British Airways and Heathrow. They have both. That is the sweet spot for us and we are heading for that."

Once its first successful launch is complete, the base aims to build capacity for "rapid launching" by 2030, where satellites would be ready to be thrust into orbit within a fortnight of notification.

"To us, it's not a race to be first, it's a race to be successful," says Gustafsson. But, he adds, "competition is good because it drives speed and cost effectiveness".

Make no mistake, the Swedes have their eyes on the stellar prize.



▲ *A Texus-58 sounding rocket being launched from Esrange in April; below, a model rocket in nearby Kiruna* PHOTOGRAPH: MATTIAS FORSBERG/SSC





▲ *Defence exercises in May at the Andøya space centre in Norway*

> *'Europe was heavily dependent on Russia. When sanctions came in we had a gap'*
>
> **Stefan Gustafsson**
> *Vice-president, SSC*

In brief

Mexico

Criminal cartels are 'fifth biggest employer'

Organised crime groups in Mexico have about 175,000 members - making them the fifth biggest employer in the country, according to research published in the journal Science.

Using a decade of data on homicides, missing persons, incarcerations and information about interactions between rival factions, the paper modelled cartel membership and how levels of violence could respond to a range of policies. The authors said the best way to reduce the bloodshed would be to cut cartel recruitment - locking up more members would actually increase the murder rate.
Thomas Graham *Mexico City*

United States

Lawsuit over death of man using Google Maps

The family of a North Carolina man is suing Google for negligence after he was allegedly directed by Google Maps on to a collapsed bridge.

Last September Philip Paxson drowned in his overturned truck in a creek under the bridge, which had collapsed nearly a decade earlier, his mother-in-law wrote on Facebook. She said neither the bridge nor the approach road had barriers or warnings. The lawsuit also names a number of companies that were responsible for the land. Google said: "Our goal is to provide accurate routing information and we are reviewing this lawsuit."
Abené Clayton *Los Angeles*

United States

Debut work by TV artist Ross on sale for £8m

A painting by the American television artist Bob Ross is for sale at nearly $10m (£8.1m). A Walk in the Woods, below, the first of more than 400 paintings Ross produced on air in 30 minutes for his TV series The Joy of Painting, is being sold by a gallery in Minneapolis.

"It is season one, episode one of what you would call the rookie card for Bob Ross," Ryan Nelson, the owner of Modern Artifact gallery, said of the work, which was created during the debut episode on 11 January 1983. Ross, who died in 1995, hosted the show until 1994 and encouraged viewers to paint along with him. AP *Minneapolis*



LIBYA FLOODS EMERGENCY

Will you help families whose homes were swept away in the devastating floods?

The flooding caused by Storm Daniel has left families in desperate need of emergency aid and shelter. Up to 20,000 people are feared dead and many more are injured or missing. In Derna, the worst affected town, entire neighbourhoods have disappeared, homes and roads have been washed away, while hospitals and other critical infrastructure have been severely damaged.



Rana Ksaifi, Head of the UNHCR Protection Team in Libya reports:

"I'm here on the ground in Derna with my colleagues... the situation is horrific. I cannot explain what I saw on the way coming to Derna. I saw roads split in half. I saw massive rocks that have been moved over from neighbouring mountains to the coastal areas. Homes have been demolished, damaged, submerged underwater. Families have lost a very big number of their loved ones. Many are still missing... the situation is far from being stable at the moment. UNHCR has already provided core-relief items as a first and immediate response, and we're working with our local partners to provide a lot more to try to mitigate the impact... But the needs are huge and a lot more support is needed and urgent."

UNHCR's Response

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, already had a significant presence in the country, so when the storm hit, teams on the ground were able to act quickly, trucking humanitarian aid to Derna and nearby Benghazi.

Right now, UNHCR is working with partners to rapidly scale up its emergency operations in Libya and urgently needs your help.

Please will you give £96 to help provide an Emergency Survival Kit for a desperate family, containing blankets, tarpaulin for shelter, solar lamps, jerry cans and a cooking set?

UNHCR is also prioritising shelter for children separated from their families and other vulnerable people, and providing medical supplies and equipment to health facilities.

Your support is urgently needed

The next few days are critical. The humanitarian needs are huge, with displaced people urgently needing shelter and material assistance. With your support, however, UNHCR has the reach, partners and logistical capabilities to get aid to the most vulnerable families.

Please give £96 today and help rush lifesaving aid to families who have lost everything.



© UNHCR/Ziyad Alhamadi

£96 could help provide an Emergency Survival Kit, containing blankets, tarpaulin for shelter, solar lamps, jerry cans and a cooking set.

Give now at unrefugees.org.uk/libya-guardian

Call 0800 029 3883, or fill in the form below

I would like to give: ☐ **£96** ☐ **£192** ☐ **Other £** ________

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to **UK for UNHCR** OR

☐ I would like to make a donation by debit/credit card

Card no. ____ ____ ____ ____ Expiry date __/__

Signature ________ Date __/__/__

☐ Tick here, if you don't want to receive an acknowledgement by post

Title ____ First name ____ Last name ____

Address ____

Postcode ____

Provide your details below to receive updates by email and/or phone on the impact of your support and how you can donate and help in other ways.

Email ____

Phone ____

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

A minimum of 75% of your gift will directly help those affected by the floods in Libya

United Kingdom for UNHCR is a registered charity in England and Wales (1183415).

Please return this form along with your cheque to:

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P23LIAGU2

Owners of volcano deny liability for visitor safety after fatal eruption in 2019

Charlotte Graham-McLay
Wellington

The landowners of a New Zealand volcano that fatally erupted in 2019 have rejected arguments from the country's workplace safety regulator that they ultimately managed and controlled activities on the island and bore legal responsibility for whether visitors were safe.

When White Island/Whakaari exploded on 9 December 2019, 22 people were killed, 17 of them Australians, and 25 others were injured. It prompted renewed debate about controls for natural hazard tourism in New Zealand.

A lengthy trial for Whakaari Management Limited (WML), a company co-directed by three brothers who own the active volcano off the east coast of the North Island, ended in Auckland district court yesterday.

It had begun with graphic accounts from the eruption's survivors - many of whom were cruise ship passengers - who said they did not know the dangers they faced when they walked to the crater of Whakaari.

Investigators from the government agency WorkSafe charged a dozen parties with health and safety law breaches after the disaster, including tourism firms, science agencies and the island's owners.

Six organisations admitted to the counts against them before the case came to trial. But despite the investigation being billed as the most complex of its kind in New Zealand's history, the case against the remaining parties started to crumble after the trial began in July: five firms or people, who had pleaded not guilty, had the charges against them dismissed after prosecution evidence concluded last month.

With only one defendant remaining, closing arguments this week contested whether WML - a company set up to grant licences to tourism operators on the island - was an active manager with legal responsibility for how safely those businesses operated on their land, and whether actions they took discharged any obligations they had.



▲ *Visitors who survived said they did not know of the dangers before they walked to Whakaari's crater*
PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL WALTER/GETTY IMAGES

22
The number of people who were killed when the volcano off the east coast of the North Island exploded

1m
The amount in New Zealand dollars the site's owners earned from licences to tour operators

Kristy McDonald, the prosecutor, told the court that Andrew, James and Peter Buttle earned NZ$1m (£500,000) in fees and commissions from the licences their company granted to tour operators.

The profits were "not reinvested into managing and understanding the risks" of tourism on an active volcano, McDonald said. The firm had legal obligations "to the tourists whose fees funded its business" because they were active managers who had the discretion to stop operators using their land.

But James Cairney, the lawyer for WML, said the volcano's owners had set up the firm solely to manage the financial side of granting licences, and the existence of a commercial interest was not anything to be ashamed of.

The trial has been the biggest test yet of New Zealand's sweeping 2015 reforms to its workplace health and safety laws - the most significant in two decades - which shifted responsibility for workplace hazards to those "conducting a business or undertaking", who must be proactive on matters of risk rather than relying upon regulators.

WML and its directors, who had individual charges against them dismissed last month, appeared to believe they "did not owe any duties under the law", McDonald said. "WML effectively points the finger at everyone else," she added.

A science agency and local emergency managers came under scrutiny over their readiness for such a disaster. It was "dangerous" to suggest "a single, private company" had a responsibility to determine "societal risk" of an activity, said Cairney.

After nearly two months of evidence from the prosecution, Cairney's remarks were the first time the island's owners had advanced a defence against the charges.

Judge Evangelos Thomas said he would give a verdict on 31 October.

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Business

Bank of England votes narrowly to keep rates on hold after spate of rises

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

Mortgage holders have been offered relief after the Bank of England kept interest rates on hold for the first time in almost two years, raising the prospect that a peak in borrowing costs has been reached in the battle against inflation.

In a knife-edge decision with the economy coming under growing pressure, the Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) voted by a narrow majority to hold its key interest rate at 5.25% – already the highest level since the 2008 financial crisis.

The decision came after official figures on Wednesday showed a surprise fall in inflation in August, and brought to a halt the central bank's most aggressive round of rate increases in decades – 14 consecutive rises since the end of 2021.

Exposing a split within Threadneedle Street's most senior ranks, the nine-strong MPC was divided 5-4, with a minority pushing for a further quarter-point rise. The Bank's governor, Andrew Bailey, cast the decisive vote in favour of a pause.

"Inflation has fallen a lot in recent months, and we think it will continue to do so. That's welcome news. But there is no room for complacency," he said, indicating that the Bank stood ready to take further action if required. "We need to be sure inflation returns to normal and we will continue to take the decisions necessary to do just that."

Financial markets bet the central bank had reached the end of its round of rate increases, while Britain's biggest high street lenders – including Nationwide – cut the rate on their mortgage products in anticipation of no further changes.

The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, said Britain was "starting to see the tide turn against high inflation", while insisting the government was on track to meet its promise to halve inflation this year.

Borrowing costs are expected to remain at high levels for a lengthy period of time as the Bank battles to bring inflation back towards the 2% target set by the government, without tipping the economy into recession.

Threadneedle Street warned risks to the economy were gathering as the impact from previous rate increases were weighing heavily on households and businesses. It said it now expected only a slight rise in output in the third quarter of the year and "weaker than expected" growth in the second half of the year.

Financial markets had been finely balanced before the decision, with the City predicting a near-even chance of a quarter-point rise.

The Bank, the chancellor and City investors were wrong-footed by the unexpected fall in UK inflation in August, to 6.7%, while separate figures showed a cooling jobs market and weaker economic activity.

Central banks around the world are approaching the end of the rate-raising cycle. The US Federal Reserve left borrowing costs unchanged on Wednesday, while the European Central Bank raised interest rates last week in a move many economists said could be its final increase.

Highlighting divisions within the MPC, the deputy governor Sir Jon Cunliffe broke ranks to join three of the independent economists on the nine-strong panel in calling for a further quarter-point rise. His decision is considered unusual because the five Bank insiders on the MPC typically move as a bloc.

Cunliffe, who will leave the MPC after completing his final term at the Bank this autumn, was joined in the minority by the independent economists Megan Greene, Jonathan Haskel and Catherine Mann. The other external member, Swati Dhingra, voted with the majority.

The decision to keep rates on hold will be welcome news for Rishi Sunak. But Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, said: "Households coming off fixed-rate mortgages will be paying an average of £220 more a month and inflation remains high because of the Conservatives' disastrous mini-budget."



Estate agent's view Landlords are leaving while wealthy sellers are thriving

After years of seeing landlords pile into the Yorkshire buy-to-let market, Bruce Collinson's estate agency has seen an exodus of late.

What was once a lucrative investment has become a headache as higher borrowing costs caused by rising interest rates have added to a long list of pressures – from the withdrawal of mortgage interest tax relief to the reduction in capital gains tax allowance in recent years.

Large numbers of landlords were selling up, said Collinson, a consultant and chartered surveyor at Leeds estate agency Adair Paxton. As a result, the supply of homes to rent is shrinking. Coupled with soaring demand, this has driven up rents across the country, causing misery for tenants.

Compared with lettings, the sales market is quieter, Collinson said, though "the prosperous bits of Yorkshire are holding up remarkably well", he added, referring to the golden triangle between Harrogate, York and north Leeds where prices range from £400,000 to £1m for upmarket homes. The market for mid- to lower-priced homes has slowed, though. "And that is largely driven by affordability because of the escalation in mortgage interest rates," he said.

Collinson welcomed the Bank of England's decision yesterday to keep interest rates on hold at 5.25%, after raising them 14 times since the end of 2021. He said it was "likely to forestall the threatened implosion of the residential market". Economists have outlined two possible scenarios: the Matterhorn – a short, sharp shock where interest rates are raised steeply, which would bring inflation down more quickly but also probably trigger a recession – and the "table mountain" approach – a sustained squeeze where interest rates do not rise much further but stay at their peak for longer. The Bank appears to be leaning towards the latter. Collinson said he favoured "a plateau but with a 10% incline so rates … gradually ease back".

The estate agency had a busy spring as usual, then "in July and August my phone stopped ringing", Collinson said, attributing that to the rising base rate. "But my phone started ringing again this month," he said, as customers' expectations grew that interest rates were close to their peak.
Julia Kollewe

'The prosperous bits of Yorkshire are holding up well'

Bruce Collinson
Adair Paxton, Leeds

Next Retailer raises profit forecast for third time as it sees end to cost inflation

Sarah Butler

Next has raised its full-year profit expectations for the third time in four months and signalled that prices could start to fall next spring for the first time in three years.

The fashion and homewares retailer increased its annual profit guidance by £30m to £875m as it said better ranges, the sunny spring earlier this year, and pay rises for many of its customers had helped to lift sales.

Full-price sales rose by 3.2% in the six months to July – a far better performance than the expected 3% drop in sales. The retailer said its cost inflation was easing, and that prices could fall next year.

In the spring it had predicted that cost prices – the amount the company pays for goods – could fall by up to 1%, although it did not rule out an increase of up to 0.5%.

Inflation will also ease this autumn with Next now expecting full-year cost prices to rise by 2% this autumn compared with 3% pencilled in previously. Cost price rises have led to retail price increases since spring 2021.

Simon Wolfson, the chief executive of Next, said if costs did come down as expected, the business would "continue to do what we have done for the last 15 to 20 years and reduce prices [for shoppers]".

He said that in the wider clothing market he expected to see a "disappearance of price inflation" – but this

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
-53.03	-26.71	-221.95	-452.75	1.1526	1.2287
7678.62	4171.07	34218.93	32571.03	-0.0040	-0.0112



◀ *The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, outside the Bank of England yesterday. She highlighted the difficulties still faced by households coming off cheaper fixed-rate mortgages*
PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA WIRE

would not mean prices would go back to the level seen several years ago.

Next benefited from the sunny weather in May and June – which it said had bolstered sales of summer clothing "at a critical time" – as well as from improving its online deliveries.

Wolfson said the group had previously underestimated the positive impact customers' pay rises would have on its sales. However, he warned it was possible that the relatively strong consumer market could be hit next year amid fears that more people could be out of work.

Next's profits were helped in the half year by lower than expected inflation on costs, as negotiations with suppliers had been eased by lower worldwide demand for commodities, freight services and production.

The company added that introducing new designs more frequently and adding more items at the middle and top end of its price range had helped it appeal to a broader audience.

"Fashion has always been about newness but it appears to us that trends are moving faster. Customers are willing to adopt new looks more rapidly than they have been for some time," the company said in an update to the City.

In the first half of the year, total sales at Next rose by 5.4% to £2.5bn, with a 5% rise in online sales and 0.5% rise in stores. There was also a 28% increase in sales via its "total platform" scheme, which includes brands such as Gap, Victoria's Secret and Made.com. Profits rose 4.8% to £420m.

Next has snapped up a series of ailing brands, including Joules and Made.com, in recent years, adding them to the portfolio of brands it sells online and in some stores.

Wolfson said Next would continue to look at further acquisitions but had strict criteria about what it would invest in, including requiring a strong brand, good management and the ability to add value by integrating the business into Next's delivery, IT and marketing systems.

He said Next was conscious of the risks of becoming a "corporate blob" in which brands began to look the same and so the group was determined to keep design, suppliers and offices separate.

"The history of retail is littered with failed conglomerates – Storehouse, Sears, Arcadia, British Shoe Corporation, Mosaic, the list goes on," Wolfson said in his presentation to City analysts.

He said even successful groups such as Zara's owner, Inditex, and Christian Dior and Fendi's owner, LVMH, could reach a point where the individual brands were worth more than the group. His added that his aim was to "retain the best of small company common sense, speed and decision-making while harnessing the best of big company infrastructure and resources".

£875m
Full-year profit guidance from Next, up by £30m, with the prospect of prices falling in 2024

2%
Expected full-year rise in cost prices, down from 3% predicted previously, as inflation eases

Analysis
Phillip Inman



Judging by the state of Britain's economy, Threadneedle Street is done with further increases

The economy is slowing by more than the Bank of England expected only a few months ago and this trend warrants the first pause in a cycle of interest rate increases going back to December 2021.

This was the message from the Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) yesterday after its decision to maintain interest rates at 5.25%.

An unexpected drop in headline inflation in August was another factor indicating that businesses and consumers were already feeling the strain of higher borrowing costs and cutting back on spending.

Inflation had been expected to rise from 6.8% in July to 7% last month, largely due to an increase in oil prices. The Office for National Statistics said a slump in food inflation and a slowing in the previously strong rise in the price of many other goods meant it had fallen to 6.7%.

The Bank's decision was good news for homeowners who were braced for a rise in interest rates to 5.5%. Those with mortgages that must be refinanced over the next year will be relieved to know the central bank has chosen to wait and see before making another move.

Rishi Sunak will also be cheered by the outcome, which could put a lid on the pain for consumers, and especially businesses that have spent recent months calling for a halt to the rate rises to prevent hundreds of thousands of firms going bust.

The prime minister already feels he is on course to hit his target of halving inflation this year from its 10.7% average in the last quarter of 2022. An interest rate freeze is a bonus.

Fears of another rate increase among business and those seeking a mortgage were supported by financial market expectations that, until earlier this week, gave an 80% chance of a quarter-point increase. That moderated after the August inflation figure was published, but there was still a belief among a small majority of experts that rates would rise.

In the minutes of the MPC meeting, the weakness of the property market was cited as one of the main reasons for a pause.

Analysis of the labour market also played a role in the decision to hold rates after the Bank's research department made it known the ONS pay figures may be exaggerating the level of workers' wage rises when business surveys showed most people were receiving considerably less.

Yet the killer statistic may have come from a figure as yet unreleased. The MPC said it was given a sneak preview of the latest survey of private sector activity, the monthly purchasing managers' index (PMI) for September.

These surveys have shown a dramatic weakening of business output and investment in recent months. It is highly probable that the committee has seen a further fall in the September numbers, due out today.

There is likely to be speculation that the Bank is now following the US Federal Reserve in a new cycle of increases that use a pause to signal there could be more rises to come. That will depend on the strength of the UK economy. Judging by the latest weak figures for growth, the Bank is done.



◀ *A protest against interest rate rises outside the Bank of England yesterday*

Do not reopen Brexit trade deal to satisfy car industry – EU official

Lisa O'Carroll
Brussels

The Brexit trade deal should not be reopened just to satisfy demands from some sectors of the UK and EU motor industry concerned about looming tariffs on electric cars, Thierry Breton, the influential European commissioner, has said.

EU leaders have come under pressure to suspend 10% tariffs on electric car exports slated to begin in January under the Brexit treaty.

But Breton, who is responsible for the EU internal market and was speaking exclusively to the Guardian, said the commission and EU leaders are bound under competition laws to look at the entire automotive "ecosystem" and not favour one "category" in the industry over the other.

He believes the trade deal should not be unpicked. "If something has been negotiated, it shouldn't be changed," Breton said.

This year, Stellantis, which is responsible for 14 brands, including Vauxhall and Jeep, issued a stark warning it may have to close operations in Britain with the loss of thousands of jobs if the tariffs were not temporarily lifted.

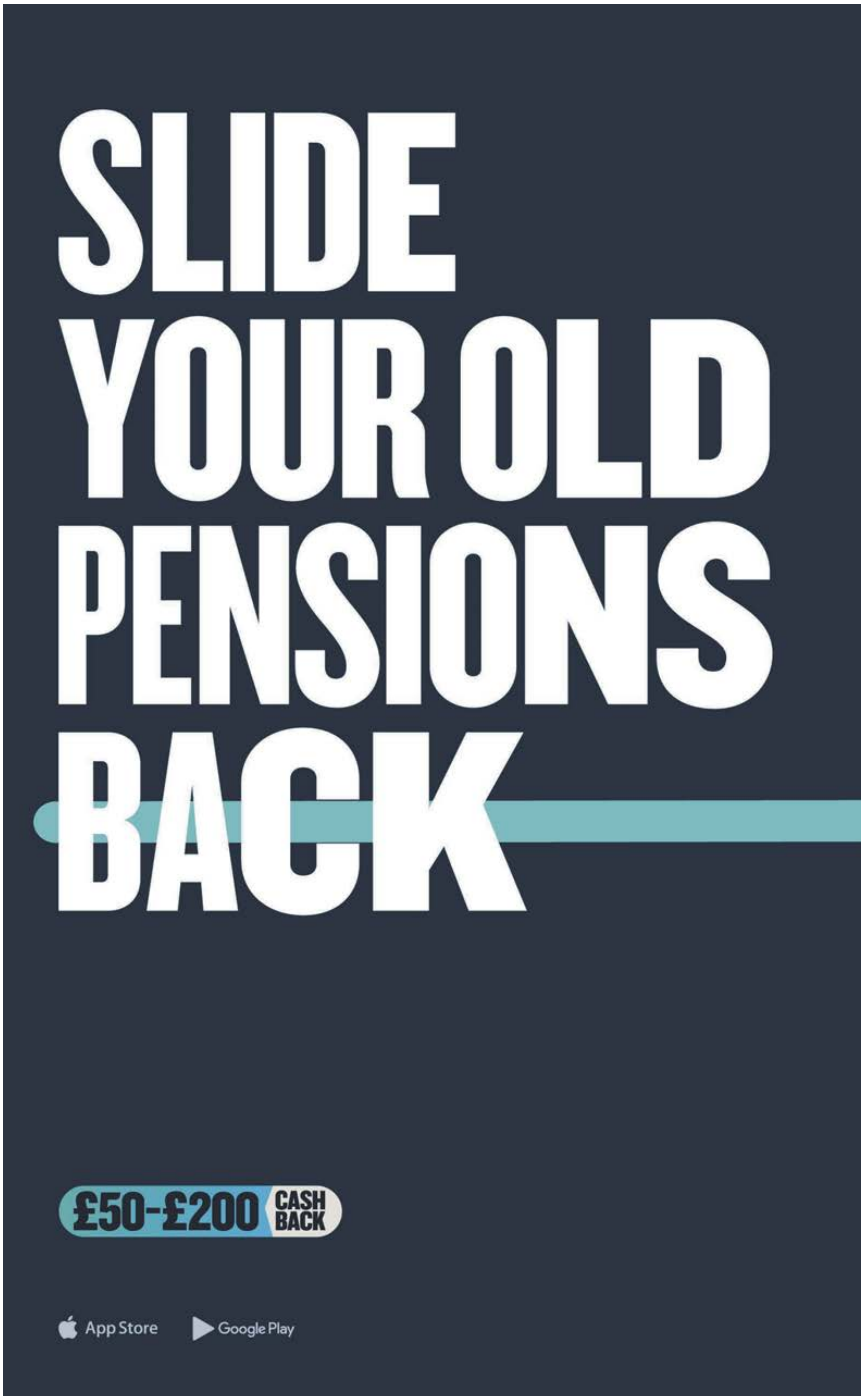
Their call has been backed by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, which has said exports of electric cars to the UK worth tens of billions of euros a year will be put at risk unless the Brexit trade deal is tweaked.

Recent support from Germany has fuelled anticipation of a favourable decision by the commission.

But Breton warned that the car industry was not made up of big brands like BMW, Volkswagen or Vauxhall alone, and he had to ensure a level playing field for all.

"Remember, the automotive industry is not made only of the manufacturers but also of the hundreds of thousands of companies providing everything which is needed for a car, including the battery providers.

"It is a global supply chain. I call it the ecosystem, and I have to look at, as commissioner of industry, not at one single part of this ecosystem but all of the ecosystem," he said.





Hamleys sets sights on 'kidults' as it reveals top 10 toys for Christmas



Zoe Wood

Hamleys is usually thinking about what will feature on the Christmas lists of children but for the first time this year the retailer has served up toy-buying ideas for "kidults" too, and they include a £150 kit for a cult radio-controlled car from the 80s.

Lifestyle changes during the pandemic led to a surge in demand from adults for games, building sets and collectible toys linked to favourite shows and childhood interests. This new toy-buying habit has not gone away and accounts for about a third of the UK's £3.6bn annual toy sales.

The most expensive recommendation for kidults (buyers aged 12 and over) is the £150 Lunch Box van from the Japanese brand Tamiya, which

Festive must-haves

1 Barbie Pop Reveal fruit series doll **£27**
2 LOL Magic Flyers **£35**
3 Ty Marvel 14" Squish-A-Boos (right) **£18**
4 Harry Potter Hamleys bear (right) **£30**
5 Beast Lab **£90**
6 Hamleys magic moving car (above) **£40**
7 Disney Winnie and Piglet's Treehouse **£50**
8 Hamleys wooden bus **£35**
9 Paw Patrol Skye rescue jet **£50**
10 Twister Air **£25**



Co-op boss urges police to get tougher on shoplifters

Sarah Butler

The boss of the Co-op grocery chain has called on the police to take shoplifting more seriously and says he is frustrated by a lack of action against thieves who cost the business £33m in the first half of the year. Matt Hood said shoplifting was becoming a major issue for UK communities with a rise in what he called "shop looting" where large amounts are stolen by organised gangs.

Crime, shoplifting and antisocial behaviour has risen 35% year-on-year at the Co-op, with more than 175,000 incidents recorded in the first six months of this year – or almost 1,000 incidents every day.

Hood said the perception that shoplifting was a response to the cost of living crisis had given rise to the idea that it was a "consequence-less crime" by those in need and the lack of a proper policing response had led it to "grow as an epidemic in the UK".

While historically thieves have targeted certain products such as cigarettes, the Co-op said they were now stealing all kinds of items from confectionery to meat and health and beauty products. Hood said the Co-op had invested £200m in body cameras for staff, CCTV and other measures to keep employees safe as the group was losing stock worth more than £70m a year. He said he was becoming "increasingly frustrated" about police inaction, claiming officers failed to respond to 71% of reports of serious crimes.

£33m
The amount the business lost due to theft during the first half of the year, according to Matt Hood

"We need police to be on the front foot in helping us retailers deal with persistent offenders," Hood said.

Simon Wolfson, chief executive of the fashion and homewares retailer Next , said it had also recorded a rise in shoplifting which had hit profit margins by 0.2%.

Last week, John Lewis said it had recorded a £12m year-on-year increase in theft. Sharon White, its chair, described shoplifting as an "epidemic".





Hamleys toy store, where Barbie's Pop Reveal fruit series doll, above, is expected to be among the big sellers
PICTURE: MARIOCHUKWU WASHINGTON-IHIEME



Haniya Rafiq, seven, plays with a Paw Patrol Skye rescue jet, tipped by Hamleys to be among its top 10 most popular toys this Christmas



first went on sale in 1987. Other suggestions include £45 collectible figures from the anime title Cult of San Reja and a £40 soft dart "blaster".

Victoria Kay, the head of buying at Hamleys, said kidults were an increasingly important demographic, with anime also a big trend for toy collectors. "You have to consider kidults and anime to be relevant in the market," she said.

In a nod to the cost of living crisis, most of the toys on its traditional top 10 for children cost £50 or less. They start at £18 for the Marvel Squish-A-Boos soft toy range, which features characters such as Spider-Man and the Hulk. At the top end is the £90 experiment-themed Beast Lab, where would-be scientists unleash a shark play figure from a tank.

Hamleys thinks LOL Magic Flyers will be a bestseller – the brand's latest iteration features a (battery-powered) fairy flying out of a box. Buoyed by the success of Greta Gerwig's film, Barbie's Pop Reveal fruit series doll is expected to be popular. The £27 scented dolls cover all bases with hair and makeup that change colour, slime and accessories to "unbox" – capitalising on a social media trend whereby people film themselves opening items for the first time.

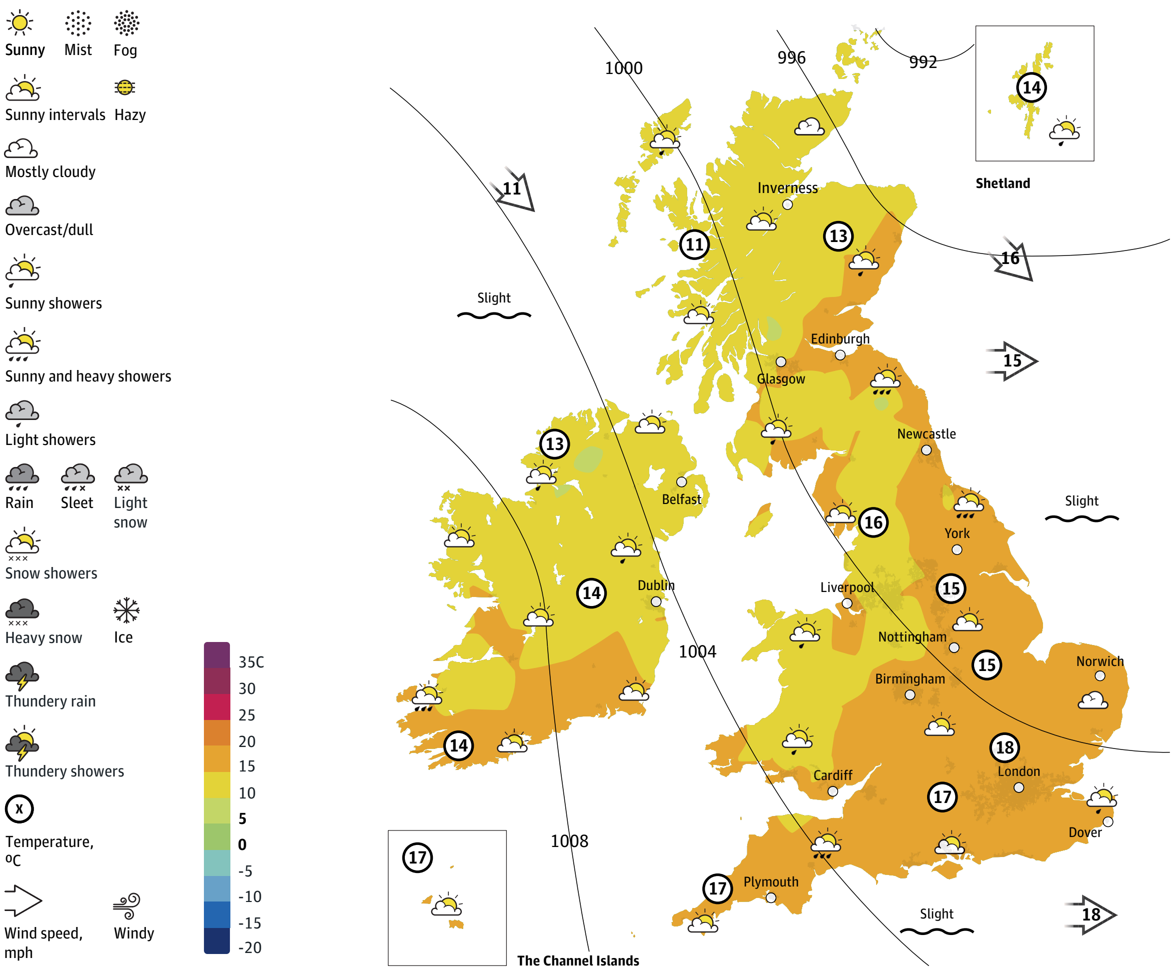
For younger children, Hamleys buyers have picked the Playmobil Winnie and Piglet's Treehouse (a tie-up with Disney, which is celebrating its centenary this year) and a toy rescue jet from the film spinoff Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie.

Finally, with games for the family to play together always popular at Christmas, the retailer tips Twister Air. It dispenses with the mat used in the classic version of game, with players instead using an app and motion-activated wristbands.



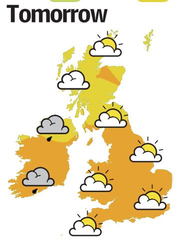
Weather
Friday 22 September 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

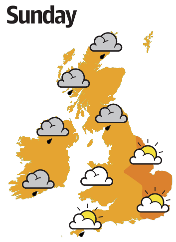


Forecast

Low 7 High 15
Tomorrow



Low 11 High 19
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

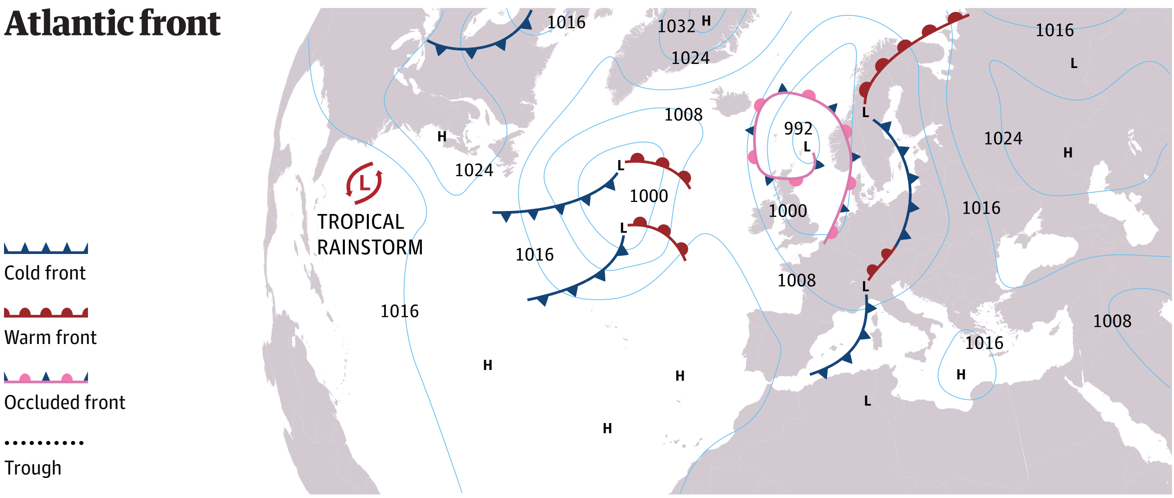
Latest	
17 Sep 2023	418.72
Weekly average	
10 Sep 2023	418.52
21 Sep 2022	416.15
21 Sep 2013	393.52
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	8 18	25%	Low
Manchester	7 14	65%	Low
Edinburgh	5 16	55%	Low
Belfast	5 13	40%	Low
Birmingham	7 16	75%	Low
Brighton	10 17	60%	Low
Bristol	9 16	65%	Low
Cardiff	8 16	70%	Low
Newcastle	5 15	65%	Low
Penzance	12 17	80%	Low

Atlantic front



Pollutionwatch

The Belgian mutual insurer Mutualités Libres has been studying air pollution. Its latest study looked at health insurance claims from 1.2 million people in Belgium in 2019 and compared this with the particle pollution in their neighbourhoods. Specifically, they looked at the costs of nearly 4m GP visits and more than half a million visits to hospital emergency departments made by young people and adults, aged 10 to 64.

After removing social and economic factors, the study found associations between GP and hospital emergency visits and particle pollution (PM2.5). Applying the results to Belgium as a whole, it estimated that reducing air pollution to match the least polluted 25% of places would have saved €43m (£37m) in GP and emergency hospital visits in 2019. More tree and grass cover was also associated with lower demand for GP and hospital visits. This was especially true of cities.

Christian Horemans of Mutualités Libres said: "The lower the concentrations of PM2.5, the fewer people need to see GPs. So, improving air quality benefits public health, and ensures the financial sustainability of the social security system." **Gary Fuller**

Around the world

Algiers	29	Lisbon	23
Ams'dam	16	Madrid	21
Athens	30	Malaga	28
Auckland	18	Melb'rne	16
B Aires	16	Mexico C	28
Bangkok	34	Miami	30
Barcelona	25	Milan	22
Basra	45	Mombasa	31
Beijing	28	Moscow	23
Berlin	20	Mumbai	30
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	32
Brussels	16	Nairobi	26
Budapest	28	New Delhi	33
C'hagen	18	New York	21
Cairo	33	Oslo	16
Cape Town	18	Paris	18
Chicago	25	Perth	25
Corfu	31	Prague	18
Dakar	31	Reykjavik	8
Dhaka	32	Rio de J	29
Dublin	13	Rome	27
Florence	23	Shanghai	24
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	30
H Kong	32	Stockh'm	19
Harare	31	Strasb'g	21
Helsinki	21	Sydney	19
Istanbul	26	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	28	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	30	Tokyo	28
K'mandu	27	Toronto	21
Kabul	28	Vancouv'r	18
Kingston	33	Vienna	26
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	26
L Angeles	23	Wash'ton	23
Lagos	30	Well'ton	17
Lima	21	Zurich	17

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0626	3.7m	1855	3.5m
Avonmouth	--	--	1206	10.8m
Barrow	0416	7.9m	1644	7.6m
Belfast	0407	3.2m	1624	3.1m
Cobh	1029	3.5m	2256	3.4m
Cromer	1123	4.3m	2359	4.1m
Dover	0332	6.0m	1559	5.9m
Dublin	0444	3.5m	1712	3.4m
Galway	1030	4.1m	2306	3.9m
Greenock	0514	3.3m	1735	3.1m
Harwich	0437	3.5m	1651	3.6m
Holyhead	0304	4.8m	1537	4.7m
Hull	1124	6.3m	2346	6.0m
Leith	0746	4.8m	2013	4.6m
Liverpool	0342	8.0m	1615	7.8m
London Bridge	0635	6.1m	1902	6.3m
Lossiemouth	0443	3.5m	1710	3.3m
Milford Haven	1106	5.7m	2334	5.5m
Newquay	1001	5.8m	2229	5.6m
North Shields	0828	4.4m	2059	4.2m
Oban	1033	3.1m	2243	3.0m
Penzance	0932	4.7m	2156	4.5m
Plymouth	1036	4.7m	2304	4.5m
Portsmouth	0415	4.1m	1643	4.1m
Southport	0302	7.7m	1528	7.5m
Stornoway	--	--	1216	3.8m
Weymouth	1049	0.8m	2321	0.6m
Whitby	0900	4.8m	2130	4.6m
Wick	0414	3.0m	1641	2.9m
Workington	0413	7.1m	1642	6.9m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0645
Sun sets	1859
Moon rises	1528
Moon sets	2204
First Quarter	22 Sept

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1924 to 0712
Birm'ham	1906 to 0654
Brighton	1900 to 0648
Bristol	1910 to 0658
Carlisle	1911 to 0658
Cork	1933 to 0721
Dublin	1924 to 0712
Glasgow	1918 to 0704
Harlech	1916 to 0703
Inverness	1916 to 0702
London	1859 to 0647
M'chester	1908 to 0656
Newcastle	1906 to 0653
Norwich	1854 to 0642
Penzance	1921 to 0709

Cricket
Roy's rejection may signal end of England career
Page 38 →

Football
Fernandes backs United's 'spirit' to curb club's gloom
Page 41 →



Sport





▲ *Luton will be underdogs in most games, making their first win all the sweeter when it finally comes*
DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

Heroes with zero

Fear not, Luton: there is still pride to be found in an epic losing streak

Max Rushden



Luton Town have no points. Four games. Four defeats. There is no shame in that. A question then: would there be a tipping point for Luton fans (not the rest of us), where getting nothing all season could become some kind of badge of honour? A season to remember like no other?

Before Hatters supporters accuse me of patronising them or being a jealous Cambridge fan, and Rob Edwards sticks this column to the dressing-room wall, nothing (well, not many things) would give me more pleasure than his side confounding everyone and staying up.

Wolves at home tomorrow is a winnable game and Edwards is right to point out that they've improved in every match and had the better chances at Fulham last weekend. It is really way too early to be considering this.

Much as we like to pore over the jeopardy of the Premier League and the EFL, teams generally finish where their wage bill suggests they should. Luton's last season was reportedly one of the lowest in the Championship. To get into, and win, the playoffs represents something extraordinary - a club run so perfectly from top to bottom.

It is an inspirational lesson of hope for all lower-league fans. One day it could be us. So I guess I am a jealous Cambridge fan. But any team managing to defeat the odds is something to celebrate in the nation-state-venture-capitalist-opaque-gambling-sleeve-sponsored-leveraged-debt-super-agent footballing world.

No one needs to be told about the disparity in the Premier League. There are speculative reports putting Luton's annual wage bill as low as £3.6m - that would be less than the Manchester clubs spend in a week. It would match what Issa Diop reportedly gets paid. How many points would Diop earn if he were to embark on a Premier League season all by himself? A bit of a problem when he gets his fifth booking or a knock in training; doubtful: Diop (hamstring).

Although it's hard to find an exact figure, it's likely to be considerably more than that. But with a squad that cost about £20m, on that metric alone Luton should go into every game as underdogs. Statistically speaking, each fixture should end in a defeat. Clearly football doesn't work like that and there are good examples of well-run clubs punching above their weight - as always they tend to be Brighton and Brentford.

It's hard to retain perspective as a season progresses, and defeats pile up. Sunderland lost 15 in a row in 2003 - but they had points on the board. There is a purity to nought points. I wouldn't want it in League One, but I wouldn't mind being the team that did it in the Premier League - the whole thing would be one big free hit.

Of course, it does depend on the size of club you support and what you really think the point of football is. Success happens so rarely, it can't be what most of us are in this for. You have to find a way of revelling in all of it - not only the highs, but the pain of relegation, or the monotony of mid-table mediocrity.

The love for your club isn't directly proportional to success; it isn't division specific. And there is pride in continuing to support your team in the tough times - something competitive about how bad your team can be. You think you've had it tough, etc. I was gutted when Derby stole Cambridge's record of 31 games without a win during their 2007-08 11-point season.

In Fever Pitch, Nick Hornby's chapter on Cambridge is all about that run of defeats and draws in the 1983-84 season - until finally Newcastle arrived at the Abbey with Keegan, Beardsley and Waddle and we won 1-0.

"In the last five minutes, with Cambridge thumping the ball as far into the allotments as possible, you would have thought they were about to win the European Cup. At the final whistle the players (most of whom, bought or pulled out of the reserves to stop the rot, had never played in a winning team) embraced each other and waved happily to the ecstatic home fans; and for the first time since October the club DJ was able to play 'I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts'."

Luton fans are well within their right to enjoy the pain but balk at the idea of anyone else laughing about it

There is a key point about the ownership of misery. We are allowed to laugh at how shit we are, but no one else is. My favourite Cambridge game is a goalless draw with Cardiff when they finished with eight men and we still couldn't score. Luton fans are well within their rights to find a way of enjoying the pain if this season progresses as many expect, but balk at the idea of anyone else talking, writing or laughing about it.

When I brought the nought points idea up on the Guardian Football Weekly, a listener, Aaron, responded that "the most objectively funny total is not 0, but 3. Still terrible but imagine any time you play that one team you beat from now until the end of time!"

And maybe that's right. Despite everything being against them, Luton will win a game - but the longer it goes, the more important to be there for that victory. Let's hope it's one of the big boys, under the lights at Kenilworth Road. Let's hope they do the seemingly impossible and survive. But if it does end up LLLLLLLL LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL in a weird way - sometime in the future - it will be something to savour.

Prest frustrates Essex while Durham seal second-tier title

Tanya Aldred
Kia Oval

After morning rumours that Sir Alastair Cook was about to announce his retirement, to be celebrated with a low-key drinks party at Chelmsford, **Essex** released a prim lunchtime statement zipping up further discussion. It stated that Cook would be "discussing his playing future with the Club at the end of the current season".

On the field Essex, desperate for points to make up their deficit behind Surrey, the leaders, got in pinching distance of enforcing the follow-on against **Hampshire**, only to hit a brick wall in the former England Under-19s captain Tom Prest. He cracked a lusty 102. Simon Harmer took another five wickets.

A most unlikely scoreline decorated the Oval mid-afternoon. After bottom-of-the-table **Northamptonshire** made 357, **Surrey** were reduced to 79 for six. But Jamie Overton then monstered 50 in company with the more sedate Ben Foakes. A storm ended play, with the possibility of a declaration and charge today, Northamptonshire needing a win or bust, and similar discussions in the air at Chelmsford.

Seven years after they were relegated by England and Wales Cricket Board edict, **Durham** secured the Division Two title at New Road. The title was theirs after **Worcestershire** were bowled out for less than 400. Worcestershire will spend the final day chasing precious bowling points, with their promotion rivals **Leicestershire** fighting hard against **Yorkshire**. Harry Swindells, hero of the One-Day Cup final, hit 73, putting on 93 for the last wicket with Will Davis.

With play at last possible at Old Trafford against **Nottinghamshire**, **Lancashire's** Keaton Jennings passed 1,000 runs for the season, while at Lord's **Middlesex** made a better fist of their second innings, thanks to a fifty from Sam Robson. **Warwickshire**'s Will Rhodes had earlier made a hundred and Danny Briggs 99.

Their fellow strugglers **Kent** had another long day against **Somerset**, Tom Kohler-Cadmore smashing 68. Lewis Goldsworthy's hundred was enlivened when he appeared to be bowled after the bottom of his bat flew off and hit the stumps, only to be reprieved by a no-ball.

The **Derbyshire** wicketkeeper Brooke Guest snaffled seven catches, to equal the club record, as **Sussex** were bowled out for 100.



Jason Roy is not in England's main World Cup squad and will miss the ODIs with Ireland

Roy pull-out could spell end of England career

Ali Martin

Jason Roy may have played his final game for England after turning down the chance to feature against Ireland in the last two one-day internationals of the summer.

Roy was dropped from the World Cup squad after a combination of back spasms and Dawid Malan's glowing form resulted in him being pushed out of the likely starting XI and Harry Brook taking his place on the bench. But he still had the chance to prove his fitness for a possible standby berth during the one-day internationals at Trent Bridge tomorrow and Bristol three days later.

England have instead added Somerset's Tom Kohler-Cadmore to what is a second-string squad to face Ireland, after Joe Root's intended one-off outing in Wednesday's series opener at Headingley was called off because of a saturated outfield.

Speaking on Roy being on standby for the World Cup, the touring party for which flies to India next week, the selector Luke Wright said: "We've made it apparent to Jason that we won't judge him differently for that position as the spare batter at the top of the order whether he plays against Ireland or not." It remains to be seen whether Roy will accept the offer – a role that would mean him remaining at home but flying out in the event of an injury to a batter – amid suggestions the 33-year-old, somewhat burned by the call, is now considering international retirement.

There is, however, the carrot of another T20 World Cup in 2024, with England set to defend that title in the Caribbean and USA next June. Though flatlining form meant Roy missed out on the triumph in Australia last year, Alex Hales calling time on his England career since presents an opportunity to push for a spot.

Either way, with just shy of 6,000 runs in limited-overs internationals, Roy will go down as an England great, having been central to the revolution that began under Eoin Morgan's captaincy in 2015 and led to 50-over glory at Lord's four years later.

Roy is unlikely to be short of domestic offers beyond playing for Surrey. He enjoyed a strong campaign for Kolkata Knight Riders in this year's Indian Premier League and signed a two-year deal to play for the franchise's satellite team in the USA's Major League Cricket.

Results

Football

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A
West Ham (0) **3** Petrovic 66og, Kudus 70, Soucek 82 — **TSC Backa Topola** (0) **1** Stanic 47
Olympiakos 2 Freiburg 3

Group B
Brighton (1) **2** João Pedro 30pen, 67pen — **AEK Athens** (2) **3** Sidibé 11, Gacinovic 40, Ponce 84
Ajax 3 Marseille 3

Group C
Rangers (0) **1** Sima 67 — **Real Betis** (0) **0**
Sparta Prague 3 Aris Limassol 2

Group D
Atalanta 2 Rakow Czestochowa 0; Sturm Graz 1 Sporting 2

Group E
Lask (1) **1** Flecker 14 — **Liverpool** (0) **3** Nunez 56pen, Díaz 63, Salah 88
Union Saint-Gilloise 1 Toulouse 1

Group F
Panathinaikos 2 Villarreal 0; Rennes 3 Maccabi Haifa 0

Group G
Servette 0 Slavia Prague 2; Sheriff 1 Roma 2

Group H
Bayer Leverkusen 4 Hacken 0; Karabakh 1 Molde 0

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Group A
Slovan Bratislava 2 KI Klaksvik 1

Group B
Maccabi Tel-Aviv 3 Breidablik 2; Zorya 1 Gent 1

Group C
Dinamo Zagreb 5 Astana 1; Plzen 1 Ballkani 0

Group D
Club Brugge 1 Besiktas 1; Lugano 0 Bodo/Glimt 0

Group E
Legia Warsaw (2) **3** Wszolek 3, Muci 26 51 — **Aston Villa** (2) **2** Durán 6, Digne 38
Zrinjski Mostar 4 AZ 3

Group F
Ferencvaros 3 Cukaricki 1; Genk 2 Fiorentina 2

Group G
Eintracht Frankfurt (1) **2** Marmoush 11pen, Koch 61 — **Aberdeen** (1) **1** Polvara 22
HJK 2 PAOK 3

Group H
Fenerbahce 3 Nordsjaelland 1; Ludogorets 4 Spartak Trnava 0

Rugby union

WORLD CUP

Pool A	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts
France	3	3	0	0	150	25	1	**13**
Italy	2	2	0	0	90	25	2	**10**
New Zealand	2	1	0	1	84	30	1	**5**
Uruguay	2	0	0	2	29	65	0	**0**
Namibia	3	0	0	3	11	219	0	**0**

France 96 Namibia 0

Cricket

LV= INSURANCE COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP

Division One *(third day of four)*

Essex v Hampshire

Chelmsford Hampshire (2pts) trail Essex (3) by 125 runs with two first-innings wickets remaining.

Essex First innings 447-9 dec (A Rossington 104, M Critchley 99, S Harmer 62, U Yadav 51, T Westley 50; S Harmer 5-143).

Hampshire First innings (overnight 10-0)
TE Albert lbw b Walter ... 39
FS Middleton b Harmer ... 47
***NRT Gubbins** c Critchley b Harmer ... 1
JM Vince c Westley b Critchley ... 46
TJ Prest not out ... 102
LA Dawson c Porter b Harmer ... 1
†BC Brown c Browne b Harmer ... 16
KHD Barker c Walter b SJ Cook ... 42
FS Organ c Critchley b Harmer ... 0
KJ Abbott not out ... 8
Extras (b9, lb10, w1) ... 20
Total (for 8, 85.4 overs) ... 322
Fall 68, 71, 134, 138, 141, 195, 284, 285.
To bat Mohammad Abbas.
Bowling Porter 10-3-27-0; SJ Cook 13.4-5-28-1; Harmer 36-6-143-5; Yadav-12-0-38-0; Walter 4-0-14-1; Critchley 7-1-38-1; Lawrence 3-0-15-0.

Lancashire v Nottinghamshire

Emirates Old Trafford Lancashire scored 225 runs for the loss of six first-innings wickets against Nottinghamshire.

Lancashire First innings
LWP Wells b Fernando ... 28
***KK Jennings** lbw b Mullaney ... 42
JJ Bohannon c Moores b Mullaney ... 6
SJ Croft c Montgomery b Harrison ... 45
†G Bell b Fernando ... 26
GP Balderson c Moores b Hutton ... 1
M Hurst not out ... 35
TE Bailey not out ... 19
Extras (b4, lb15, nb4) ... 23
Total (for 6, 69 overs) ... 225
Fall 84, 88, 91, 132, 133, 181.
To bat JM Blatherwick, WSA Williams, J Morley.
Bowling Hutton-14-5-38-1; Fernando-15-6-31-2; Paterson-13-3-43-0; Mullaney-13-5-32-2; James-5-0-30-0; Harrison-9-1-32-1.

Middlesex v Warwickshire

Lord's Middlesex (3pts) trail Warwickshire (5) by 98 runs with nine second-innings wickets remaining.

Middlesex First innings 121

Warwickshire First innings (overnight 228-6)
***WMH Rhodes** c Robson b Bamber ... 102
DR Briggs c Simpson b Helm ... 99
CN Miles b T J Murtagh ... 29
OJ Hannon-Dalby c Cracknell b Helm ... 10
C Rushworth not out ... 6
Extras (b1, lb10, nb14) ... 25
Total (89.4 overs) ... 315
Fall 0, 13, 25, 43, 87, 95, 238, 296, 298.
Bowling T J Murtagh-25-5-83-6; Bamber-18-5-62-2; Higgins-6-0-14-0; Yadav-16-1-70-0; de Caires-6-0-17-0; Helm-17.4-7-51-2; Robson-1-0-7-0.

Middlesex Second innings
SD Robson not out ... 51
***MD Stoneman** c Burgess b Miles ... 32
JL Davies not out ... 10
Extras (lb1, nb2) ... 3
Total (for 1, 29.3 overs) ... 96
Fall 78.
To bat JB Cracknell, RF Higgins, JA Simpson, JM de Caires, J Yadav, TG Helm, E Bamber, TJ Murtagh.
Bowling Hannon-Dalby-10-5-35-0; Rushworth-10-0-35-0; Barnard-5-3-10-0; Briggs-1-0-4-0; Miles-3.3-0-11-1.

Somerset v Kent

Taunton Somerset scored 404 runs for the loss of four first-innings wickets against Kent.

Somerset First innings
TA Lammonby c Finc h b Bell-Drummond ... 109
***TB Abell** c Muyeye b Bhuiyan ... 20
LP Goldsworthy c Leaning b Jas ... 122
ARI Umeed c Finch b Leaning ... 49
T Kohler-Cadmore not out ... 68
†JEK Rew not out ... 3
Extras (b8, lb6, w1, nb18) ... 33
Total (for 4, 86 overs) ... 404
Fall 73, 205, 310, 394.
To bat T Banton, L Gregory, JA Brooks, JH Davey, N Wagner.
Bowling Hogan-11.2-1-30-0; Bhuiyan-16-2-87-1; Evison-17.4-2-66-0; Jas-19-0-95-1; Bell-Drummond-13-1-54-1; Leaning-6-0-34-1; Denly-3-0-24-0.

Surrey v Northamptonshire

The Oval Surrey trail Northamptonshire by 199 runs with four first-innings wickets remaining.

Northamptonshire First innings (overnight 351-9; KK Nair 144 no, TAI Taylor 66; T Lawes 4-100)
KK Nair c & b Lawes ... 150
C J White not out ... 5
Extras (lb3, w2, nb18) ... 23
Total (106.5 overs) ... 357
Fall 33, 51, 106, 132, 138, 151, 193, 307, 307.
Bowling Roach-19-6-61-0; Worrall-26-7-74-1; Overton-15.5-1-64-3; Clark-21-5-43-1; Burns-0.1-0-0-0; Lawes-23.5-5-105-5; Patel-1-0-7-0.

Surrey First innings
***RJ Burns** c Gay b Taylor ... 11
DP Sibley lbw b White ... 32
RS Patel c Broad b Procter ... 5
BS Sudharsan c McManus b Procter ... 3
†BT Foakes not out ... 33
CT Steel b White ... 0
J Clark c McManus b Sanderson ... 9
J Overton not out ... 50
Extras (b5, lb2, nb8) ... 15
Total (for 6, 52.2 overs) ... 158
Fall 26, 43, 49, 62, 66, 79.
To bat T Lawes, K A J Roach, D J Worrall.
Bowling Sanderson-20-8-45-1; White-13.2-4-33-2; Taylor-10-2-39-1; Procter-9-2-34-2.

Division Two *(third day of four)*

Derbyshire v Sussex

Derby Derbyshire trail Sussex by six runs with nine first-innings wickets remaining.

Sussex First innings
AGH Orr c Guest b Chappell ... 10
TGR Clark c Guest b Dal ... 31
***TP Alsop** c Guest b Conners ... 5
JM Coles c Guest b Dal ... 6
D Ibrahim c Guest b Conners ... 2
H Ward c Guest b Chappell ... 2
†OJ Carter b Conners ... 2
FJ Hudson-Prentice c Guest b Chappell ... 23
HT Crocombe b Chappell ... 4
JD Unadkat c Thomson b Conners ... 4
SF Hunt not out ... 0
Extras (b5, lb4, nb2) ... 11
Total (36.2 overs) ... 100
Fall 18, 27, 40, 57, 61, 63, 65, 77, 100.
Bowling Chappell-10.2-1-39-4; Conners-13-4-32-4; Brown-5-0-17-0; Dal-8-6-3-2.

Derbyshire First innings
HRC Came c Orr b Hunt ... 26
LM Reece not out ... 50
BD Guest not out ... 12
Extras (lb2, nb4) ... 6
Total (for 1, 23 overs) ... 94
To bat W L Madsen, J L du Plooy, M Lamb, A T Thomson, Z Chappell, P R Brown, S Conners.
Bowling Unadkat-7-2-21-0; Hudson-Prentice-4-0-17-0; Hunt-6-1-27-1; Crocombe-4-0-13-0; Ibrahim-2-0-14-0.

Leicestershire v Yorkshire

Leicester Yorkshire (3pts) lead Leicestershire (3) by 35 runs with nine second innings wickets remaining.

Yorkshire first innings (overnight 155-9 (WS Davis 4-28).
JA Thompson c Cox b Scriven ... 2
BM Cliff not out ... 0
Extras (b4) ... 4
Total (39.2 overs) ... 155
Fall 45, 79, 91, 96, 98, 112, 147, 147, 155.
Bowling Wright-12-2-44-1; Scriven-12.2-0-47-3; Currie-7-1-32-2; Davis-8-1-28-4.

Leicestershire First innings
RK Patel lbw b Coad ... 0
ST Evans lbw b Hill ... 15
***LJ Hill** c Tattersall b Hill ... 42
U Amin lbw b Hill ... 10
L Kimber c Bean b Cliff ... 4
H Swindells c Tattersall b Revis ... 73
†OB Cox lbw b Hill ... 13
TAR Scriven b Thompson ... 17
CJC Wright c Lyth b Thompson ... 0
SW Currie b Cliff ... 0
WS Davis not out ... 44
Extras (b1, lb12, nb2) ... 15
Total (53.1 overs) ... 233
Fall 0, 58, 65, 70, 80, 97, 139, 139, 140.
Bowling Coad-14-2-47-1; Thompson-12-0-61-2; Hill-16-4-69-4; Cliff-7-0-27-2; Revis-4.1-1-16-1.

Yorkshire Second innings
A Lyth not out ... 51
FJ Bean b Scriven ... 43
BO Coad not out ... 1
Extras (lb18) ... 18
Total (for 1, 22 overs) ... 113
Fall 112.
To bat J H Wharton, Shan Masood, G C H Hill, J A Tattersall, M L Revis, B W M Mike, J A Thompson, B M Cliff.
Bowling Wright-7-3-24-0; Scriven-8-1-34-1; Currie-3-0-16-0; Davis-4-0-21-0.

Worcestershire v Durham

Worcester Durham trail Worcestershire by 303 runs with 10 first-innings wickets remaining.

Worcestershire First innings (overnight 104-1; G Roderick 52)
†GH Roderick b de Leede ... 52
JD Libby c Robinson b Raine ... 57
Azhar Ali c Bedingham b Coughlin ... 25
JA Haynes b Coughlin ... 35
AJ Hose retd hurt ... 4
K Ali c Jones b de Leede ... 22
***BL D'Oliveira** b Parkinson ... 63
LV van Beek lbw b de Leede ... 6
BMJ Allison b Raine ... 22
J Leach not out ... 8
D Pennington lbw b Raine ... 0
Extras (b10, lb9) ... 19
Total (83 overs) ... 313
Fall 96, 117, 172, 179, 248, 260, 301, 313, 313.
Bowling Raine-22-4-66-3; Fernando-22-2-77-0; Coughlin-20-5-71-2; de Leede-13-0-68-3; Parkinson-5-1-10-1; Borthwick-1-0-2-0.

Durham First innings
AZ Lees not out ... 3
MA Jones not out ... 7
Extras ... 0
Total (for 0, 4 overs) ... 10
To bat SG Borthwick, DG Bedingham, O G Robinson, G Clark, B de Leede, BA Raine, P Coughlin, MVT Fernando, MW Parkinson.
Bowling Leach-2-0-7-0; Pennington-2-1-3-0.

Greg Wood's racing tips

Ayr **1.15** Never Fear **1.45** Media Shooter (nb) **2.15** Purosangue **2.50** Pink Crystal **3.25** Little Muddy (nap) **4.00** Bicep **4.35** Alpine Sierra **5.10** Bobby Shaftoe

Newbury **1.50** Von Baer **2.25** Machiavellian Lady **3.00** Jubilee Walk **3.35** Blue Lemons **4.10** Aldaary **4.45** Arenas Del Tiempo **5.20** Sayf Al Dawla

Newton Abbot **2.00** Walk In Clover **2.35** Astroman **3.10** Manimole **3.45** Janeslittlevoice **4.20** Alvaniy **4.55** Imperial Measure

Kempton **4.40** Orne **5.15** Age Of Baroque **5.45** Venus Rosewater **6.15** Debora's Dream **6.45** Primeval **7.15** Pink Jazz **7.45** Trusty Scout **8.15** Muy Muy Guapo

Fixtures

Football
Uefa Women's Nations League
Group A1 England v Scotland (7.45pm);
Group A3 Iceland v Wales (7pm).
Sky Bet Championship
Birmingham City v QPR (8pm)
Cinch Scottish Championship
Queen's Park v Ayr Utd
Cymru Premier
Cardiff MU v The New Saints;Aberystwyth v Penybont (8pm)

Rugby union (7.45pm unless stated)
World Cup
Pool D Argentina v Samoa (4.45pm)
Premiership Cup
Pool stage Gloucester v Harlequins; Newcastle v Sale

Rugby league
Betfred Super League (all 8pm)
Huddersfield v Warrington; Leeds v Castleford; Leigh v Wigan; Salford v Catalan; St Helens v Hull; Wakefield v Hull

Golf

Expect fireworks as Europe chase historic third victory

Ewan Murray
Finca Cortesin

Suzann Pettersen's Solheim Cup experiences suggest her captaincy is unlikely to prove dull. At Finca Cortesin, Pettersen leads a European side who are seeking to create history by winning the transatlantic joust three times in a row for the first time. The Norwegian exudes a level of confidence that will come back to bite her should those in stars and stripes turn tables. Interestingly, this bullish approach from the hosts is fuelled by the success of their players on the United States-based LPGA Tour. Legitimate questions remain over the strength of the Ladies European Tour, which has recently been quietly enhanced by Saudi Arabian riches.

Onlookers should prepare for theatre. Pettersen spent the Sunday evening of the 2015 Solheim Cup crying in her hotel room after involvement in a rules debacle. At Gleneagles four years later, Pettersen slammed home the winning putt for Europe immediately before declaring she was retiring from professional golf. She has been true to her word; Pettersen assisted Catriona Matthew in 2021 but otherwise has kept her distance from the front line of this sport. Her status is such that nobody begrudged her that.

"I know everything about these players, probably more than they know themselves," said Pettersen. She feels no need to tell her 12 golfers that a three-timer is unheard of.

"I don't really have to tell the players what we're up for," Europe's captain added. "I think the players are really on it. I think it's always great to have a possible dream to chase. That's great. But there is so much golf to be played from where we sit here today to the end of Sunday that this is not something that I'm pushing on the players at all." Indeed, fine margins tend to determine Solheim Cup outcomes.

In Stacy Lewis, Pettersen has a formidable opponent. Both captains are known for their ferociously competitive spirit. Each is a two-time major champion. They are also different in approach; Lewis appears far more focused on statistics than Pettersen. Lewis used numbers to defend her opening session selection of Lexi Thompson, who has been struggling for individual form.

"We started the week and I had a couple people within our team, between caddies and helpers, come up to me and just say: 'She is hitting it really good,'" said Lewis of Thompson. "Every day there has been more and more people telling me this. With the data and the analytics that we have, I actually have their strokes gained from the practice over the last two days and she is off the charts right now."

Ludvig Åberg will experience a Solheim Cup before a Ryder Cup. The Swede is expected on the first tee here this morning to show his support for Team Europe – including close friends Linn Grant and Maja Stark – before heading to Rome for the men's equivalent.

The venue will present challenges. The mountains of Andalucía provide a stunning backdrop but an estimated 10,000 spectators per day will find it tricky to navigate the course on foot. If umpteen matches run close to 18 holes, there will be a genuine question over finishing during daylight.

Åberg will watch Grant and Stark lead Europe off in the foursomes. "They were asking for this so here we go," said Pettersen. The Swedes will face Thompson and Megan Khang. Céline Boutier and Georgia Hall take on Danielle Kang and Andrea Lee. Leona Maguire, who excelled in Ohio two years ago, will partner Anna Nordqvist against Nelly Korda and Allisen Corpuz. In game four Charley Hull and Emily Pedersen will play Ally Ewing and Cheyenne Knight. Hull has been troubled by a neck injury but insists she is fit enough to play. "I told the girls these pairings on Monday night so they have had all week to prepare," said Pettersen.

Lilia Vu, a two time major winner in 2023 and the world No 2, will surprisingly sit out the opening day foursomes for the US. So, too, will the emerging star Rose Zhang. The US, in the unusual position of the underdog, could do with a flying start.

▼ *Team Europe supporters soak up the atmosphere at yesterday's opening ceremony in Spain*
STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES



Rugby World Cup

Kinghorn keen to make most of elevated Scotland status


Blair Kinghorn is set to keep his place at full-back against Tonga

Anthony Brown
Nice

Blair Kinghorn is relishing his elevated status as Scotland's first-choice World Cup full-back after spending most of his international career to date trying to emerge from the shadows of Finn Russell and Stuart Hogg.

The Edinburgh back has accumulated 47 caps since his debut in 2018, largely due to his versatility in being able to operate at No 15, No 10 and even on the wing. In trying to establish himself at full-back, Kinghorn found Hogg – Scotland's record try-scorer – blocking his way to a starting place, while his bid to become an international stand-off always seemed unlikely for as long as the talismanic Russell was still at the top of his game.

Hogg's retirement earlier this summer opened the door for Kinghorn to set about making the No 15 jersey his own. After starting the two summer Tests against France last month, it came as little surprise when he got the nod over the less experienced full-back Ollie Smith to start the World Cup opener against South Africa. He is expected to retain his place for Sunday's match against Tonga in Nice as the Scots bid to bounce back from their 18-3 defeat by the Springboks.

"I feel like there's been a different focus this pre-season, coming into the World Cup feeling like I can grab a starting jersey," said Kinghorn. "Being able to start at 15 is something I don't take lightly. Everyone always wants to be starting for their country and now that I've had the opportunity to start the last game, and a couple of the warm-up games to start at 15, it's been really exciting for me."

For much of 2022, amid tension between Gregor Townsend and Russell, it looked like Kinghorn was being primed as a Scotland fly-half. However, with Russell and the head coach having patched up their differences last November, Kinghorn's hopes of becoming No 10 for the national team were in effect dashed.

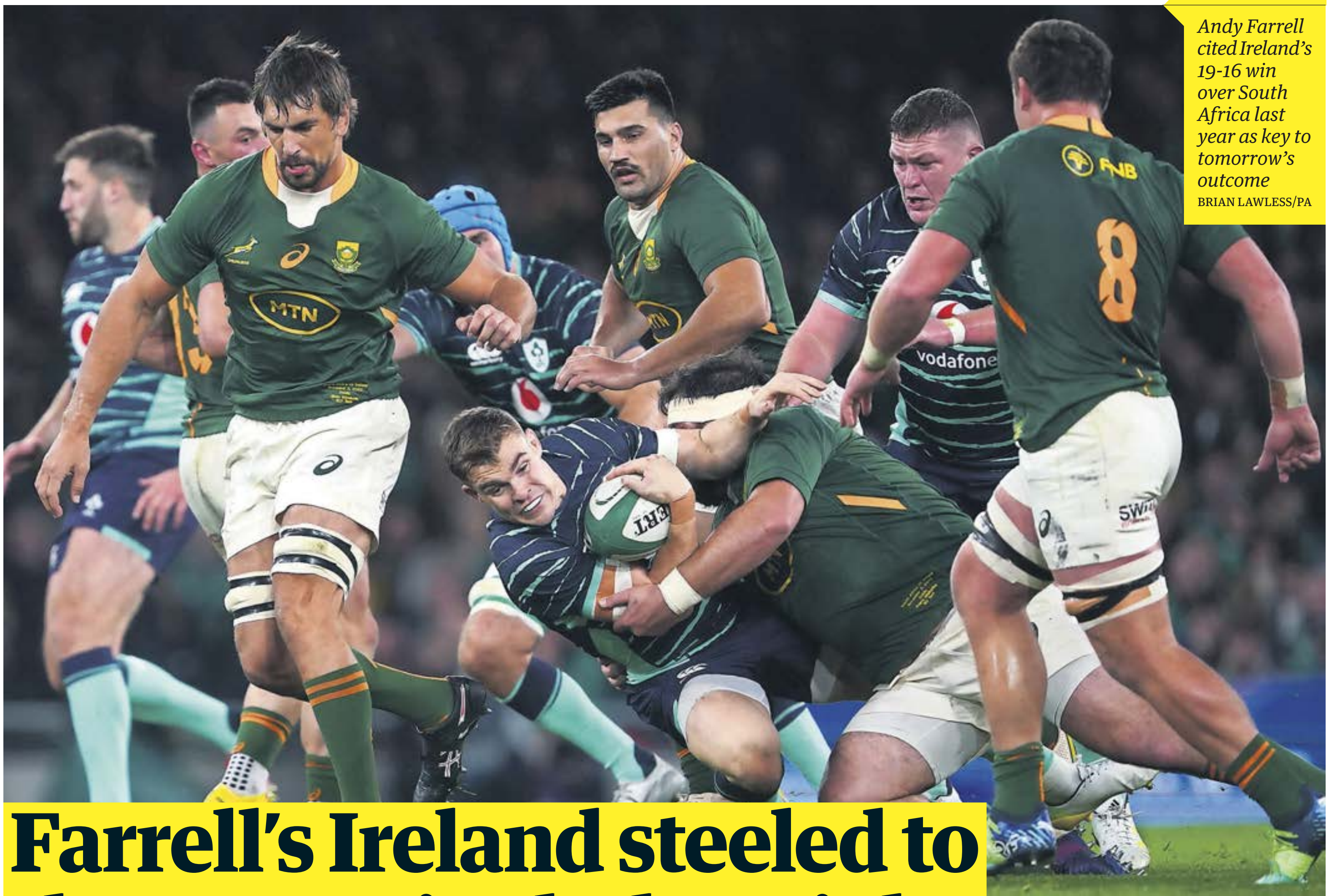
"I think so," he said when asked if his focus was now fully on the full-back position. "I feel comfortable back there. I've got the ability to cover stand-off if needed but I feel like full-back is my best suited position at the moment, and I feel like that's where I can offer the team my strengths."

Kinghorn knows he has big boots to fill in succeeding Hogg, one of Scotland's greatest ever players, but he is intent on playing the position his own way. "Obviously, Hoggy was a world-class player so over the last five years since I've been in camp with him I've been picking up little bits of knowledge here and there from him, but I'm looking to put my own game into that 15 jersey," Kinghorn said.

The 26-year-old is enjoying his second World Cup after going to Japan in 2019. He was a fringe man at that tournament, making just two appearances and only one as a starter. Kinghorn feels he has developed significantly as a player and a person since then. "When you're younger you're a bit naive to how much work it takes," Kinghorn said. "I'm a more mature player who has dealt with more life experience within rugby and I can handle situations a bit better." **PA Media**



Offer ends 5 October 2023. Sky Sports Golf for £15 extra pm for 12 months with 31 day rolling contract (then £18). Prices may change during this period. Requires Sky Q: 18 month minimum term. Standard set-up: £20 for new customers; up to £49 for existing customers. Subject to status. Upfront payment may be required. Offer not available with any other offers. Further terms apply. Information correct at 15 August. For more information go to https://www.sky.com/tv/sports.



The best is coming in clash of the titans

Andy Farrell cited Ireland's 19-16 win over South Africa last year as key to tomorrow's outcome
BRIAN LAWLESS/PA

Farrell's Ireland steeled to thwart Springboks might

South Africa's nuke squad dominate pre-match agenda with the sheer size of task and top ranking at stake

Robert Kitson
Paris

The Rugby World Cup is not all glamour. South Africa are staying outside a one-horse town 25 miles north of Paris where even the horse took one look at yesterday's torrential rain and declined to leave its stable. Ireland are now based next to a motorway junction near EuroDisney, a long, long way from the capital's smartest boulevards.

It was hard to avoid the sense of another big missed promotional opportunity for rugby, certainly from a photographer's perspective. Johnny Sexton and Siya Kolisi posing in front of the Arc de Triomphe? Faf de Klerk offering passing tips to the dancers at the Moulin Rouge? Instead, on the eve of this most marketable of top-level games, all of them were sitting in sterile conference rooms, doing their best not to generate any unwanted headlines.

Mostly they succeeded but the next person who asks Ireland's head coach, Andy Farrell, for his view on South Africa's bench selection might be best advised to do so from a safe distance. "I did pose the question to our forwards coaches as to whether we should go with seven backs and one forward, but they weren't up for that," replied Farrell, wearily. Touché.

In private, even the Irish management will probably concede their Springbok counterparts have done a decent job of hijacking the pre-match agenda. Whatever anyone thinks about the notion of naming seven forward replacements, it has created a talking point that is still racking up impressive yardage.

And, a cynic might say, cleverly reinforced the idea of South African physicality despite the absence of two of their strongest forwards, Malcolm Marx and Duane Vermeulen.

Going early with the announcement of their "nuke squad" (the "bomb squad" has been superseded) has also helped to overshadow Ireland's team unveiling, which might otherwise have had a wider impact. Look down the Irish team sheet, with Jamison Gibson-Park back at scrum-half and the fit-again Dan Sheehan on the bench, and there is class everywhere, as befits the world's No 1 side.

That lofty title, rather bizarrely, is up for grabs based on this weekend's outcome, with World Rugby having decided to update the rankings during the tournament rather than waiting until after the final. What is really focusing the minds of both sides, though, is the chance to cement a path out of Pool B and strike a psychological blow that might just come in handy later in the knockout stages.

The Boks, in particular, have been planning for this weekend for years. Jacques Nienaber is heading over to work for Leinster after this World Cup but that does not mean he is preparing to bend the knee to an Irish team that have lost only two of their past 29 Tests. Nor is he minded to apologise to those who believe the 7-1 split, while perfectly legal as things stand, has uncomfortable safety implications, particularly if too many other sides opt to send on a fresh pack of forwards simultaneously.

"It's not against the laws of the game and I don't think it has any bearing on player safety at all," said Nienaber, well aware discussions about reducing the number of permitted substitutes are ongoing. "It will be a sad day, I think, if you're innovative in the laws of the game and then they would change that."

Farrell would clearly far rather be talking about Ireland but the size of the challenge coming down the track is impossible to duck. "Barring us, our team and management and Irish people all over the world, I think everyone thinks they're the favourites and they're going to win this game," he suggested. "I can see why because of the form they've shown. But we don't think like that. We are ready for a tough battle and it will take its own course."

His captain Sexton also knows exactly what to expect – "They test you in every aspect and that is why we are going to have to be on top form" – with the battle of the breakdown certain to be critical. South Africa may be lacking Marx, so good over the ball, but they do have battalions of low-slung forwards well capable of filling the void.

'Barring the Irish, I think everyone thinks they're the favourites and are going to win'

Farrell, similarly, will be backing last year's world player of the year, Josh van der Flier, and Caelan Doris to thrive in that area and injury could yet wreck South Africa's best-laid bench plans. "Even with a 5-3 split, you can't cover everything," stressed Farrell, whose respect for the Boks' modus operandi does not yet extend to wanting to copy it. "I am confident in the five forwards we have got coming off the bench and the type of game we're going to play when that happens."

Wait and see, in other words. Farrell also referenced Ireland's 19-16 win the last time the sides met in Dublin some 10 months ago. "More important than the 7-1 split, which is a bit irrelevant to us, is the last game we played against each other. We feel we could have performed better on that occasion." Even on a wet day, in an unfashionable part of town, there is serious anticipation in the damp Parisian air.

'Ultimately I want to be out there more than anything'

Continued *from back page*

since his red card against Wales on 12 August. "I've been looking forward to getting to the World Cup and it's been tough-ish not playing, but it's been brilliant to see how well the lads have been doing on the pitch and I can't wait to be part of it," said Farrell. "Ultimately I want to be out there on the grass more than anything. It's been good to be involved in the training over the past few weeks and obviously prepare the team in the best way we can. But I'm looking forward to being able to play.

"[When I'm watching], I don't detach myself. I'm knackered by the end. I wouldn't describe myself as a good watcher. I feel involved, I feel like I'm out there at times. I feel every emotion that goes with it, sometimes even more than I would if I was playing. I wouldn't describe myself as the best in the stands."

Smith's selection at full-back is eye-catching given he has made only three cameos from the bench in that position to date – in the warm-ups against Ireland and Fiji, and the pool win against Japan. Freddie Steward has started the past 28 matches for England in the No 15 jersey but Smith gets the chance, with Borthwick adamant he has no concerns over the 24-year-old's defensive capabilities.

"He is an incredible talent who has the ability to find space," said Borthwick. "We have been working on him as a 15 option – we discussed this some time ago, from very early in our camps together. Having Marcus as an option there is obviously a great strength for us. Given the way he has come on to the field and played in that position, he deserves that opportunity.

"Everyone knows his ability with ball in hand. Everyone knows he's got a great tactical kicking game. Having that ball in space at 15 gives him even more time to find opportunities and find more space. His ability under the high ball is very good and he is a really tough, brave defender. Marcus has shown himself to bring a real intensity to his defence as well."

Borthwick has made 12 changes in total: with England already on the verge of a place in the last eight, Henry Arundell, Max Malins, Jack Willis, David Ribbans and Bevan Rodd all make their first appearances of the tournament.



Owen Farrell has been praised for his off-field leadership at the World Cup

'Systemic discrimination'
Spain star Alexia Putellas hits out at treatment of World Cup winners Page 3 →

Fernandes defiant as Ten Hag's task grows

Manchester United captain staunch in defence of teammates but Munich mess highlights shortcomings

David Hytner
Munich



Bruno Fernandes says United will 'fight for results'

Bruno Fernandes did not like the sentiment and the answer was predictably defiant. Moments earlier, with another Manchester United inquest under way, Erik ten Hag had been asked whether the problems at the club were to do with a lengthy injury list or the mentality. "Both," he replied.

It is never a good look when a manager questions the fight and determination of his players but Ten Hag could not hide the dismay after Wednesday night's 4-3 Champions League defeat at Bayern Munich. Now it was put to Fernandes, the United captain. Was there an issue with the mentality? Because there were numerous moments when United looked so soft and easy to play through.

"Everyone has to do their own job and look at themselves first," Fernandes replied. "That's what I do as a player - not as a captain, as a person. I think everyone does that and it wasn't the case that not everyone was good, doing their best for the team or fighting for the result. I think everyone did that."

Fernandes went on to talk about how the momentum was against United; Bayern was their fourth defeat in six matches this season and everybody knows that they could have lost the other two.

"No one would expect us to come to Bayern and score three goals … to fight for the result [until the end]," Fernandes continued. "I think the team did that. It wasn't enough but we're not playing against some bad team. Obviously, it's not the best moment for us but we will get through this." Stirring words. The problem was that they came too late; the evidence on the pitch had already damned United and driven Ten Hag to distraction.

It was a seven-goal thriller at the Allianz Arena only in the loosest sense because United were unable to get something from a promising first 20 minutes or so and then sleepwalked to defeat after the concession of the opening goal on 28 minutes. They dealt badly with that setback, conceding again quickly, and what was also galling was how, after their goals for 2-1 and 3-2, they allowed Bayern to restore their two-goal cushion almost immediately. It pointed to a lack of emotional control - as well as tactical shortcomings.

Rasmus Højlund's goal for 2-1 - his first for United - was a tonic. Yet 60 seconds later, when he was robbed in possession by Jamal Musiala, it led to Bayern breaking with two on two. Leroy Sané fed Musiala, who had sprinted forward to make an extra man, and his shot was deflected narrowly off target. It was from the corner that Bayern got the penalty for their third goal, scored by Harry Kane.

What most infuriated Ten Hag was the sloppiness on the first two concessions. The first was a horror show for André Onana, who seemed to dive over Sané's tame shot, but it is gruesome to rewatch the buildup.

Marcus Rashford and Sergio Reguilón show Sané inside from the right and the winger's touch appears heavy, setting up a 50-50 with Christian Eriksen. Yet only one player looked like getting to the ball first and it was not Eriksen. He and Rashford then watch as Sané surges on to a lay-off from Kane before the shot and Onana's misfortune.

On the second, it is shocking to see how easily Musiala turns and runs around Casemiro, with Eriksen unable to get across to challenge. Into the box, Musiala gets the better of Diogo Dalot, Victor Lindelöf is sucked over and Casemiro, too, chases towards the ball. Nobody spots Serge Gnabry, who has pulled into space for the cutback. When Gnabry finishes, Eriksen arrives belatedly.

Ten Hag urgently needs to address the balance of the midfield and it will be interesting to see whether he uses Sofyan Amrabat - when he is fit - alongside Casemiro to give the team a more robust base. If so, how would he accommodate Fernandes and Mason Mount, who has also been missing with injury?

Casemiro remains in the line of fire, despite his two late goals against Bayern. He has been unable to dominate as he did for much of last season.

"The positive is that the spirit was there," Fernandes said. "We tried. It wasn't enough but at periods the team showed great spirit. We have to do it more often and for 90 minutes."

'Bigger than bonuses': FA and Lionesses agree pay deal

Marcus Christenson

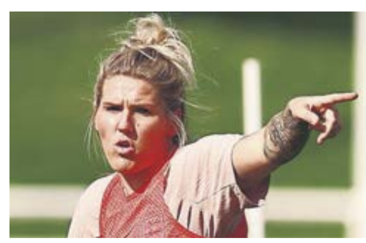
Millie Bright has said England want to be "world leaders on and off the pitch" after reaching an agreement with the Football Association over bonuses and commercial structures.

The issue flared up before the World Cup when the Guardian broke the story of the dispute. The players then tweeted a statement expressing their disappointment that the matter had not been resolved before the tournament and said they had decided to pause talks with the intention of revisiting them after.

Bright, speaking before the Nations League game against Scotland today, said that the players had "had a really good conversation with the FA". It is understood that the FA significantly increased their offer in order to come to a deal.

Bright said: "We have come to an agreement but it's bigger than just the bonus. For us it's about being world leaders on and off the pitch, and as we know the women's game is evolving very quickly and conversations like this need to happen to make sure in all areas we're at the top of our game."

"The conversation was extremely positive and we feel really confident about the structure we have in place."



▲ *The Lionesses want to leave a strong legacy, says Millie Bright*

The focus of the negotiations had been on backpay for commercial appearances as well as performance and World Cup bonuses. There is a genuine feeling that this agreement will pave the way for better discussions in the future and that there are not similar disagreements before a major tournament again. The players have been very keen to leave a legacy for future generations.

Bright said: "It's the whole package that comes with the women's game. It is more than just finances, it's everything to do with the next generation … We're extremely lucky and privileged that we have excellent facilities, and we already set the tone in many areas. I think that those conversations are also just about checking in [with each other] so that if a problem does pop up we're in a position where we can have an open, honest conversation and be more solution-based, and that's why we felt really positive."

The England manager, Sarina Wiegman, said that she had expected an agreement to be reached. "As I said, the conversations had been [going] really well, but the World Cup was ahead of us," she said. "So they needed to stop those conversations and had to start up after the World Cup. And that's what happened. Yes, they didn't come to an agreement then but I think the connections were made and there's communication all the time. Now this part is solved and moving forward, it looks really good.

"That makes me very happy because it's good for the players, good for the women's game to move forward and to take the next step."

Wiegman also said that the Arsenal forward Alessia Russo will not be involved today but will return for the game against the Netherlands on Tuesday. The 24-year-old, who played in Champions League qualifying matches for the Gunners this month, joined up with England later than other squad members after what the FA called a "period of recuperation", and Wiegman said: "She's fine, she's good. But before camp I had a conversation with her and I decided that she needed a little more rest. We're preparing her for availability for Tuesday."



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'We can learn'
De Zerbi admits inexperience cost his side

Ed Aarons
Amex Stadium

Roberto De Zerbi admitted that Brighton's lack of experience cost them dearly as their European debut ended in a surprise defeat to AEK Athens.

A late goal from the substitute Ezequiel Ponce sealed victory for the Greek champions in the Europa League group stages after João Pedro equalised twice from the penalty spot for the hosts, who were missing the defensive talisman Lewis Dunk through injury. But with a trip to face Marseille up next before Brighton face a double header against the four-time European champions Ajax, De Zerbi acknowledged they must adapt quickly to their new surroundings.

"We can learn and we have to learn," said the Brighton manager. "We can improve but it's difficult to accept this defeat. We showed not the right experience. Maybe not the same experience of AEK but for the rest we played with personality and the right attitude and controlled the game, dominated the game and we are sad for the result. Sad because we couldn't make our fans happy, our club happy. But we can learn if we want to make another upgrade we have to know before the game the situation where we can concede goals."

Dunk and the teenage forward Evan Ferguson, who was left out of the match-day squad after falling ill, are both expected to return for Sunday's visit of Bournemouth. But after making seven changes from the side that defeated Manchester United 3-1 at Old Trafford, De Zerbi refused to criticise his players. "I can't be happy when we win at Old Trafford and sad today if performances are both good," he added.

The AEK Athens manager, Matías Almeyda, admitted he was pleased that his side had proved the doubters wrong after their surprise win. "I believe a lot in the work we do on a daily basis," said the former Argentina midfielder. "The opposition on a number of occasions forced us to play another kind of game. But it is the fighting spirit of the team and we earned some respect.

"There were two journalists here yesterday – when I mentioned we were here to win, one of them laughed. He's not here today. We don't want to be underestimated by anyone. We knew the greatness of this team. They play a fantastic kind of football but we stood tall."



▲ *Roberto De Zerbi was sad Brighton lost their first European game*



Brighton rocked by opening setback

Ezequiel Ponce celebrates after taking advantage of slack defending to score AEK Athens' late winner
GLYN KIRK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Ponce pounces to ruin Brighton's big night despite João Pedro brace

Brighton 2
Pedro 30pen 67pen

AEK Athens 3
Sidibé 11, Gacinovic 40, Ponce 84

Ed Aarons
Amex Stadium

If all Brighton's matches in Europe are this exciting then it should be some ride. A thrilling spectacle in which João Pedro equalised twice from the penalty spot after AEK Athens had taken the lead through Djibril Sidibé and then Mijat Gacinovic ended in frustration for Roberto De Zerbi as Ezequiel Ponce sealed a smash and grab victory for the Greek champions with a late goal.

It was a harsh lesson for Brighton, who badly missed the leadership qualities of defensive linchpin Lewis Dunk as they failed to deal with AEK's threat on the break all night. But given the journey they and their supporters have been on to get here over the last decade, De Zerbi will know that all is not lost.

Dunk's absence had been rumoured in the buildup to kick-off, with the England defender thought to be struggling with a neck problem, and he was sorely missed as AEK ruthlessly took advantage of Brighton's inexperience at this level.

A large contingent of travelling supporters was boosted by the presence of AEK's London fanclub and they celebrated their victory long into the rain-sodden night on the south coast.

De Zerbi had rung the changes again after Brighton's convincing win over Manchester United at the weekend, with only four players who started at Old Trafford retained in the starting lineup. That meant Ansu Fati – who has joined on loan from Barcelona until the end of the season – made his first start and there was a less than impressive debut for the Brazilian defender Igor Julio in place of Dunk in the heart of defence.

De Zerbi had stressed beforehand that Brighton could use this competition to continue their evolution and there was a real sense of anticipation in the air as the teams emerged to a cacophony of noise and waving blue and white flags. It was only 14 years ago that this club were still languishing in League One and playing their home matches at a local athletics stadium but, under the shrewd ownership of Tony Bloom combined with De Zerbi's tactical nous, they feel like they belong at this level already despite this setback.

Yet it certainly was not in the script when Sidibé's bullet header from Ehsan Hajsafi's corner after 11 minutes gave AEK the lead before Jason Steele had to stretch to deny Levi García immediately afterwards. The Trinidadian then spurned another golden opportunity to extend the lead for Matías Almeyda's side, only to drag his shot badly off target.

Fati then registered Brighton's first shot on target before Igor was wayward with a free header after being picked out by João Pedro's cross. It was the Brazilian forward who provided the breakthrough after the Estonian referee Kristo Tohver had initially shown him a yellow card for diving following a challenge inside the box from Hajsafi. But that was swiftly overturned by VAR, with De Zerbi not daring to watch as João Pedro sent Cican Stankovic the wrong way to equalise. Yet neither the Brighton manager nor Dunk, who was watching on from the stands, could believe their eyes when another lapse of concentration allowed Gacinovic to inadvertently slide home Hajsafi's free kick to restore AEK's lead six minutes before the break.

The home side emerged early for the second half, no doubt with De Zerbi's half-time teamtalk still ringing in their ears. But Igor, who played in last season's Europa Conference final against West Ham for Fiorentina, was again caught napping by an early AEK break and deservedly shown a yellow card for bringing down García. James Milner then made way for Tariq Lamptey as Brighton attempted to increase the energy, only to be held up for a significant delay when the impressive Hajsafi was taken off on a stretcher.

It took a moment of madness from Damian Szymanski to offer Brighton a lifeline as the Poland defender stumbled on the edge of his own area when under little pressure and seemed to panic as he brought down Pedro for another penalty. Once again, however, referee Tohver saw it differently and had to be persuaded by the VAR before Pedro doubled his tally with clinical precision from the spot.

De Zerbi was shown a yellow card after a brutal challenge from substitute Milad Mohammadi sent Lamptey sprawling as tempers threatened to boil over. João Pedro came closest to putting Brighton ahead, only to be denied by a good save from Stankovic before the substitute Ponce punished Kaoru Mitoma for giving the ball away cheaply. Despite 13 minutes of injury time, however, Brighton could not find another equaliser and must learn quickly if their first European adventure isn't to prove shortlived.

Brighton
4-4-2
Steele; Milner (Lamptey 55), Van Hecke●, Igor Julio●, Estupiñán●; March, Gilmour (Buonanotte 86), Gross, Mitoma (Adingra 86); Fati, Pedro (Welbeck● 82)

AEK Athens
4-4-2
Stankovic; Sidibé●, Szymanski●, Mitoglou●, Hajisafi (Mohammadi● 61); Gacinovic● (Eliasson 79), Pineda (Mantalos● 79), Jønsson, Amrabat; Araújo (Zuber 68), García (Ponce● 68)

Referee Kristo Tohver (Est)

Sima hits winner while Villa slump

Abdallah Sima's second-half goal was enough to give Rangers a hard-fought 1-0 Europa League victory over Real Betis at Ibrox. Sima poked home from close range to settle a competitive match between two of the favourites to progress to the knockout stages. Rangers had Jack Butland to thank for making several key saves.

In the Europa Conference League, Aston Villa struggled in a 3-2 defeat at Legia Warsaw, with Ernest Muci's second-half winner giving the hosts a deserved victory. Pawel Wszolek and Muci had twice put Legia ahead in the first half only for Jhon Duran and Lucas Digne to peg them back. Unai Emery, who made five changes, said: "This is a new step for us … we have to learn."

Aberdeen lost 2-1 at Eintracht Frankfurt after the on-loan Leeds defender Robin Koch headed a 61st-minute winner for the hosts. Ester Sokler missed a good chance to level in stoppage time. PA Media

Salah seals fightback to give relieved Klopp a European milestone

Lask 1
Flecker 14

Liverpool 3
Núñez 56pen, Díaz 63, Salah 88

Andy Hunter
Raiffeisen Arena

Short but sweet would be Liverpool's preference for their return to the Europa League and an assured start was made with victory over Lask in Austria. Another comeback was necessary but, that minor inconvenience aside, this was a performance that again demonstrated the options and quality available to Jürgen Klopp.

Victory was Klopp's 50th in Europe, the most by a Liverpool manager in the club's illustrious history, and the fifth in succession this season by a team that is developing nicely. And rapidly. Lask took an early lead and played high on adrenaline until confronted by a commanding second-half Liverpool display that brought goals from Darwin Núñez, Luis Díaz and Mohamed Salah. The Austrian side had no answers once Núñez levelled from the penalty spot and an uncertain opening 45 minutes from the visitors in Linz was long forgotten by the time Salah nutmegged the goalkeeper Tobias Lawal for Liverpool's third.

"I know people expect us to fly through this competition, it will not happen," said Klopp. "In the group stage it will not happen and in the knockout stage it will not happen. We have to dig in. That's what we did tonight." On the achievement of his own half-century, the Liverpool manager added: "If I still have 50 after the group stage then even if I have the most wins in Europe as a Liverpool manager everybody will hate that. It's great, but probably because the competition now has so many more games than in the past."

Six consecutive seasons of Champions League football, including three appearances in the final, may have made the drop into the Europa League more painful for Liverpool but there was humility in the approach to their first game in the competition since the 2016 final defeat by Sevilla. The Europa League is where "we deserved to be" admitted Virgil van Dijk, while Klopp insisted there would be no complacency from the competition favourites towards what appeared a straightforward group. This a trophy the manager desperately wants to add to his collection in Dublin next May.

There was a first start for the exciting 17-year-old winger Ben Doak, as well as the new signing Ryan Gravenberch. The midfielder Stefan Bajcetic made his first appearance of the season at right-back after his recovery from injury. The amount of changes might have been a risk but each one of Klopp's selections needed game-time, whether on account of fitness, lack of opportunity or development. There were other contributory factors to a clumsy first-half display that allowed Lask to take the lead from their first attack of note.

A loose touch from Harvey Elliott resulted in Rene Renner delivering a low cross to Robert Zulj, whose shot on the turn was deflected over by Van Dijk. Sascha Horvath floated the subsequent corner over a crowded penalty area towards Florian Flecker, lurking unmarked outside. The right wing-back controlled perfectly and drove an unstoppable half-volley beyond the despairing dive of Caoimhin Kelleher.

Confidence surged through the home team and it needed a vital block from Van Dijk to prevent Marin Ljubicic doubling Lask's lead having shrugged off Ibrahima Konaté. Liverpool were struggling to find rhythm with the midfield partnership of Wataru Endo and Gravenberch understandably uncertain on their first appearance together. That said, it took a fine reflex save from Lawal to deny Núñez an equaliser before the break. The Uruguayan looked certain to score when Van Dijk headed a Kostas Tsimikas corner back across goal but, from point-blank range, Lawal clawed away the header.

As was the case at Wolves on Saturday, a few half-time tweaks conjured a vast improvement from Liverpool. Klopp's side were awarded a penalty when a flowing move involving Elliott and Bajcetic set up Díaz. As he sliced wide he was felled by the lunging Philipp Ziereis. Núñez stroked a powerful spot-kick past Lawal.

The introduction of Dominik Szoboszlai as part of a triple substitution on the hour injected the accuracy and vision that Liverpool's passing had lacked. Within three minutes the visitors had turned the game on its head, in style. Núñez did a fine job to hold off his marker under pressure and find Elliott. The young midfielder sent Gravenberch sprinting down the right and when his low cross arrived in the penalty area Díaz was on hand to steer home an emphatic finish.

There was no prospect of a Lask recovery and the substitute Salah sealed victory when he rode two challenges brilliantly and squeezed a shot through Lawal's legs.

Lask
3-4-3
Lawal; Ziereis●, Andrade, Luckeneder (Darboe 80); Flecker (Ba 89), Jovicic, Horvath, Renner (Bello 88); Ljubicic (Koné 69), Zulj●, Havel● (Mustapha 68)

Liverpool
4-3-3
Kelleher; Bajcetic● (Gomez 61), Konaté● (Matip 82), Van Dijk, Tsimikas; Elliott, Endo (Mac Allister 61), Gravenberch (Salah 74); Doak (Szoboszlai 61), Núñez, Díaz

Referee Marco Di Bello (It)



▼ *Mohamed Salah's clever nutmeg in the 88th minute gives Liverpool a third goal*
NICK POTTS/PA



▲ *Mohammed Kudus celebrates after putting West Ham in front*

Kudus makes his mark to help Hammers overcome scare

West Ham 3
Petrovic 66og, Kudus 70, Soucek 82

TSC Backa Topola 1
Stanic 47

Jacob Steinberg

After making the mistake of being too passive either side of half-time, this turned into a useful exercise for West Ham. It is rare for David Moyes's side to dominate possession and they needed to be smart after a dreadful error from Angelo Ogbonna handed TSC Backa Topola a lead to defend at the start of the second half. The pressure was on, particularly as TSC are the weakest team in Group A, and West Ham responded. They moved the ball at greater speed, stretched the play and made a winning start to their Europa League campaign after puncturing TSC's defence with their ability to load the box and overwhelm opponents with James Ward-Prowse's threat from a dead ball.

What a start Ward-Prowse has made to his time in east London. There were two more assists for the midfielder here, which will delight Moyes. The manager fought to bring Ward-Prowse in from Southampton, reasoning that his clever passing and set-piece prowess would improve his side, and can take immense satisfaction from how West Ham have recovered from selling Declan Rice to Arsenal for £105m.

Shrewd reinvestment has them dreaming. Ward-Prowse has had an immediate impact, providing efficiency and experience, and this victory was also notable for an incisive full debut from Mohammed Kudus on the right flank. Kudus, who is still getting up to speed after joining from Ajax, did not hide when West Ham fell behind. The Ghana forward kept bursting into dangerous positions and, having forced the own goal that brought Moyes's side level with 24 minutes left, went on to make it 2-1 by opening his account for his new side with a glancing header from a Ward-Prowse corner.

The hope for Moyes is that creative talents such as Kudus turn West Ham into a more artful side. Never happier than when they are absorbing pressure and waiting for opportunities to strike on the break, this was a different kind of test for them. TSC, intent on smothering and spoiling as they adjusted to playing in Europe for the first time, had done their homework. There was no chance of them pushing up during the first half.

The plan was to sit back and make West Ham play in front of them. It worked well for long periods, with the visitors twice threatening to snatch the lead as half-time approached, though West Ham could not be accused of a lack of endeavour. Not once has Moyes treated these Thursday night assignments as an inconvenience. Playing in Europe has been an enriching experience, not least when Jarrod Bowen was running through to settle last season's Europa Conference League final, and Moyes has always sent his side out with the right attitude.

There are obvious benefits to Moyes leading West Ham into three consecutive European campaigns for the first time in their history. There is depth to the squad and it initially seemed that West Ham would overwhelm TSC. The Serbian leaders were anything but expansive.

Yet the problem for West Ham, who visit Liverpool on Sunday and made nine changes, was that they failed to strike when they were on top. Danny Ings and Thilo Kehrer tested Nikola Simic before Konstantinos Mavropanos, who was handed his debut in central defence, headed narrowly wide from a corner.

Where TSC were effective, though, was in minimising Lucas Paquetá's influence. They squeezed the midfielder's space and others in claret and blue had to step up. Saïd Benrahma needed more consistency on the left, Ings more tenacity up front, and Pablo Fornals could not complain about being replaced by Michail Antonio in the 61st minute.

West Ham were behind at that stage, TSC punishing a lack of urgency when Petar Stanic dispossessed Ogbonna at the start of the second half. The Italian, the last defender, could do nothing to stop Stanic running through to beat Lukasz Fabianski with a firm finish.

West Ham had to stay calm. Antonio made a difference, stretching TSC and making space on the flanks. Five minutes later Benrahma perked up, twisting and turning before crossing from the left. Kudus attacked the ball and Nemanja Petrovic turned it into his own net.

It was not long before West Ham led. The aerial barrage wore TSC down and Kudus took advantage of poor marking by heading in Ward-Prowse's corner. Tomas Soucek, on as a substitute, made the scoreline look more emphatic by scoring from another Ward-Prowse set piece with eight minutes left.

West Ham
4-3-3
Fabianski; Kehrer●, Mavropanos, Ogbonna, Cresswell (Emerson ht); Ward-Prowse, Fornals (Antonio 61), Paquetá (Cornet 86); Kudus, Ings (Soucek 77), Benrahma

TSC Backa Topola
4-4-2
Simic; Cvetkovic, Antonic, Dordevic (Krstic 69), Petrovic (Rakonjac 81); Radin, Dakovac (Cirkovic 80), Stokic, Kuveljic● (Vulic 80); Stanic, Jovanovic (Mirchevski 90)

Referee Filip Glova (Svk)

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Sport

Saudi defiance

Crown prince vows to 'continue doing sport washing'

Paul MacInnes

The crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, has said he "doesn't care" about accusations of sportswashing against his country.

Bin Salman, known as MBS, has presided over unprecedented spending on sport since becoming Saudi's de facto ruler in 2017. Critics argue the investment is intended to distract attention from his country's human rights abuses. But in a rare interview Bin Salman said he was not troubled by the accusations.

"If sport washing is going to increase my GDP by way of 1%, then I will continue doing sport washing," Bin Salman told Fox News in the first interview he has given fully in English.

Asked specifically how he felt about the term, Bin Salman said: "I don't care … I'm aiming for another 1.5%. Call it whatever you want, we're going to get that 1.5%."

Saudi sporting ambitions have extended from acquiring overseas organisations, with Newcastle United the most prominent, to running disruptive competitions such as LIV Golf. But the kingdom has also been assiduous in striking deals to bring top sports events to Saudi, including this year's Fifa Club World Cup and the Asian Games in 2029. Bin Salman says this approach is central to the country's goal of becoming one of the world's top 10 tourist destinations.

"When you want to diversify an economy you have to work in all sectors: mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, transportation, logistics all this," Bin Salman told Fox. "Part of it is tourism and if you want to develop tourism part of it is culture, part of it is your sport sector."

Bin Salman argued that tourism has substantially increased in importance. "We can see tourism used to contribute to Saudi GDP 3%, now it's 7%," he said. "Sport used to be 0.4%, now it's 1.5%, so it's economic growth, it's jobs, it's a calendar, it's entertainment, it's tourism. We are aiming to get over 100 million visits in 2030, maybe 150. Last year we reached almost 40 million visits from Saudi and globally."

With Saudi's tourism growth focused at least in part on domestic and regional visitors, alongside the substantial number of Muslim visitors performing hajj or umrah to Mecca, observers have argued that criticism from largely western countries is something Bin Salman can afford to ignore. The argument is reinforced by Saudi's increasingly central role in regional politics and the country's importance as an ally to the United States.

Human rights organisations have been consistent in labelling Saudi investments as sportswashing and Amnesty International reiterated its condemnation of Bin Salman's record on human rights yesterday.

"Mohammed bin Salman's rule has been a truly dark time for human rights in Saudi Arabia, and no amount of talk about economic visions or of an expansion into new sporting ventures should be allowed to distract from that fact," said Felix Jakens, Amnesty's head of priority campaigns.

"Not caring about the sportswashing label is one thing, but Mohammed bin Salman also doesn't seem to care about the peaceful activists languishing behind bars, the 196 people executed in the country last year, or the personal pain of the family of Jamal Khashoggi who are still desperately hoping to see justice done in his case."


Mohammed bin Salman admitted wanting to use sportswashing to boost Saudi Arabia's GDP

The changing face of Saudi Arabia, is the West being bought? On Tuesday 10 Oct, 8pm-9.15pm, join Devika Bhat, Nesrine Malik, Patrick Wintour, Barney Ronay and Safa Al Ahmad for a livestreamed discussion on Saudi Arabia diplomacy tactics. ***theguardian.com/events****


IAN WALTON/REUTERS

Seagulls sunk on their European bow

Brighton	AEK Athens
2	3

AEK Athens' Ezequiel Ponce wheels away after scoring the winner against Brighton
Match report *Page 42 →*

Borthwick welcomes back Farrell to lead England against Chile

Gerard Meagher
Lille

Owen Farrell will return as captain for the rest of England's World Cup campaign with Steve Borthwick giving his clear backing to the fly-half, who comes straight back into the side for tomorrow's match against Chile.

Farrell is available after his four-match suspension and expressed his relief at returning, saying he is "not a good watcher". He regains the No 10 jersey, with Borthwick omitting George Ford and handing Marcus Smith a first start at full-back.

Ford has been one of England's standout performers to date - scoring 41 points across their two victories so far - but he drops to the bench. With Courtney Lawes rested and left out of the 23 altogether, Farrell also resumes the captaincy and Borthwick has confirmed he will continue in the role.

"I picked Owen as captain back in June and have been very clear on that," said Borthwick. "Owen has been an incredibly influential off-field leader. The way he has helped this team through the first rounds of this World Cup has been fantastic and we're looking forward to seeing him back on the field.

"What I think Owen does is firstly the example he sets, which is second to none and he is somebody you can follow. Secondly, his ability to harness all of those people and bring them all to be influential leaders within the squad is a real skill."

Farrell has not played 40 →

The west is slowly waking up to a new global order *Nathalie Tocci, page 3*
Improve the world, says Murdoch. So why didn't he? *Jane Martinson, page 3*
If you want domestic bliss, head to Scandinavia *Helen Russell, page 4*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Friday 22 September 2023

Journal

Opinion and ideas

It's all that Sunak has left now: scorched-earth Conservatism

Gaby Hinsliff



After the turmoil of recent years, you might think British politics had lost its capacity to shock. But when some of the angriest voices raised against this week's shameful climbdown on net zero come not just from passionate greens, but from car manufacturers and the energy industry? Now we really are through the looking-glass.

What happened this week was the most surreal opening to a long election campaign - for that's surely what it was - I can recall. For the leader of the erstwhile party of business to water down climate policy and still somehow contrive to end up getting furiously attacked for it by Big Auto is surprising enough. Managing simultaneously to leave Boris Johnson claiming the moral high ground and Liz Truss looking relevant, given she had just called for such a retreat, is something else.

The next step in a promised string of bold decisions may be to kill off various bits of the HS2 rail project, judging by Rishi Sunak's public refusal to rule that out this week. Levelling up? Forget it. There could be few better metaphors for this era in politics than a fast link between central London and the north that may end up costing billions without actually ever reaching the north, and possibly not central London either (the Birmingham to Manchester stretch and the bit linking Ealing to Euston are reportedly under review).

Though the death of the levelling up dream may be less emotive than the junking of plans to save the planet, both U-turns represent the torching of what credibility the Conservatives had among the people most likely to give the party the benefit of the doubt, and both have much deeper consequences for where the country is heading.

Once again, Britain is starting to look in the eyes of the world like an unreliable ally, prone to making and then breaking promises on the wheel of its own political incompetence. Rumours of a net zero retreat first started circulating last weekend, yet car-makers meeting the transport secretary, Mark Harper, on Monday afternoon reportedly left under the impression that the 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel car sales was staying. Ford, which said it had ploughed £430m into electric car production in Britain with more to come, issued an unusually angry public rebuke stressing the need for "ambition, commitment and consistency" from No 10; BMW, which had only just announced plans to make electric Minis at its Oxford plant, stressed that "we and the whole automotive industry [need] clarity".

Renewable energy firms were equally blindsided by the news breaking hours after a meeting at which ministers had reassured business leaders that net zero was a

It's all that Sunak has left now: scorched-earth Conservatism

Gaby Hinsliff

← Continued from front

top priority, according to Energy UK's Emma Pinchbeck. "It's just chaos, isn't it?" said an angry Juergen Maier, a former CEO of the renewable energy giant Siemens and vice-chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. "Everybody is now sitting and wobbling and wondering. And I tell you what, they won't be investing in the UK."

The general air of chaos surrounding the announcement may seem trivial compared with the substance of it, but both have a direct impact on the future of the planet: as Pinchbeck pointed out, up to 70% of the cost of reaching net zero is supposed to be stumped up by a private sector that now doesn't know what to believe, and won't risk pumping billions into products for which the market may suddenly disappear.

Outrageous as the climate climbdown itself is, there are at least some grounds for hoping it's less apocalyptic than it sounds.

When a prime minister starts padding out his big U-turn by scrapping policies that never existed in the first place - from an imaginary tax on meat to some weird fever dream about seven rubbish bins - it's worth questioning exactly how deep it goes. Delaying the ban on selling new petrol and diesel cars until 2035 is a blow but could at least be a short-lived one, with Labour promising to move it back to 2030 if it wins next year's election.

The scrapping of an obligation on landlords to fit insulation and other energy-efficiency measures is seriously bad news not just for the climate but for renters left to shiver in cold, damp housing; delaying the cutoff date after which homeowners won't be able to get a new gas boiler will also have an impact. But new, more generous grants for homeowners buying heat pumps look like an attempt to speed up their adoption by other means.

What's worrying, however, is the cavalier way in which all this has been presented by a government scrabbling for survival.

Ministers are behaving as if they think business will grumble a bit but rally round in the end, for fear of a Labour government. But global companies in 2023 don't think like that. They can deal with either Sunak or Keir Starmer, but the one thing they expect is a clear line around which to plan. Given how long new cars take to design and build, the automotive industry thinks a decade ahead when planning production sites. They don't take kindly in Michigan or Japan to hearing that everything's changed at the last minute because of canvass returns from somewhere called Mid Bedfordshire.

The truth is that Britain had already become a less attractive place in which to make things, having left the EU single market. But by moving faster towards net zero than other countries, it was at least promising to create a pool of early adopters who would be nudged into buying electric cars faster than German or Spanish or Californian drivers. When Sunak says soothingly that this U-turn just brings us into step with other countries, what he neglects to mention is that being out of step was meant to be our big post-Brexit trump card.

All this might be less corrosive if it didn't reinforce a fear of British unreliability dating back to the 2016 referendum, when big multinationals were privately assured by David Cameron's government that remain would win comfortably, only to be blindsided by a vote to leave. Since then they've had to deal with the endless uncertainty of Brexit negotiations, the one-man chaos engine that was Johnson and the economic hallucinations of the Truss era.

The whole point of Rishi Sunak was that he was meant to be different, a man the world could do business with. Yet now to placate the Tory right, he is suddenly and not entirely convincingly being repackaged into something that looks wearily familiar. This is scorched-earth Conservatism, in an alarmingly literal sense. It cannot be allowed to burn the country down with it.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Europe

The dark influence of the radical right is leading to a continental drift

The taxation of property in the eastern German state of Thuringia would normally be a subject of strictly local concern. But last week a vote to cut stamp duty in the regional parliament in Erfurt made national headlines. Ignoring a cross-party taboo on collaborating with the far-right Alternative für Deutschland party, local Christian Democrats and liberals co-opted its support to force the measure through. Loud condemnation duly followed. But with the AfD running second in national polls, there are grounds for fearing that this will not be the last occasion on which the cordon sanitaire surrounding the party is breached.

The Thuringia vote is just one sign of changing and volatile times in European politics, as the radical right expands its influence on the mainstream. New PopuList research by 100 political scientists in 31 countries, reported in our new digital Europe edition, finds that almost one-third of Europeans voted for anti-establishment parties in national elections held last year. Half of that number voted for the far right, which is increasing its vote share among these disaffected voters most rapidly. Illiberal, nationalist parties hold power in Italy, Hungary and Poland. They have a share of it in Finland and Sweden and anti-establishment forces have every chance of acquiring it in forthcoming elections in the Netherlands and Slovakia. Austria's Freedom party, ostracised at the time of its emergence in the 1990s, is well ahead in the polls, with elections due next year.

As Europe seeks to meet immense challenges relating to migration, the transition to net zero and growing geopolitical instability, the trend is deeply concerning. A nativist hostility to immigration still drives most radical-right parties. But the researchers found that the climate emergency, the cost of living crisis, various culture wars and post-lockdown conspiracy theories have allowed them to diversify and forge new coalitions of voters.

Perhaps most insidiously, the higher profile of the radical right is normalising agendas that until recently would have been seen as beyond the pale. The AfD - which has embraced climate change denialism in the past - has successfully weaponised anxieties about net zero measures, orchestrating a backlash which (as in Britain) is seeping into mainstream politics. Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, hopes to use next year's European elections to effect a merger between the centre right and her own radical-right grouping in the European parliament. Should that project succeed, ensuring that EU values and norms are upheld in countries such Viktor Orbán's Hungary and a Law and Justice-led Poland will become even harder.

Europe's apparent rightwards drift is not a fait accompli. But there is a risk that, as mainstream parties accommodate more and more of the radical right's agenda, it becomes one. Years of austerity, followed by the pandemic and the Ukraine-related cost of living crisis, have led to chronic economic insecurity for less well-off Europeans. That has created an opening for ugly political movements and populist leaders to exploit. In Poland, for example, which goes to the polls in a few weeks' time, the Law and Justice party has ruthlessly demonised minorities and irregular migrants, but also offered generous welfare benefits to struggling families. If progressive forces are to shift the dial in a more inclusive, liberal direction, they will need to restore faith in the capacity of mainstream politics to deliver in anxious economic times. The latest PopuList research underlines the urgency of the task.

Derna

The leaders of Libya have enjoyed impunity. Their people have had enough

To count the thousands killed by the floods in the eastern Libyan city of Derna does not truly help us grasp their loss. "Those people are not numbers at all … Those people are love stories, friendships, dreams, ambitions … are people who had names," Johr Ali, a journalist from the city, told the Guardian's Today in Focus podcast.

Libyan authorities do not want people to focus on those victims, or why they died. Global heating made the torrential rain that hit Libya 50 times more likely, scientists say. But it was the collapse of dams and failure to evacuate that multiplied this disaster. Survivors want to know why warnings about the structures were ignored and what happened to millions of dollars allocated for their maintenance. But on Tuesday, after furious residents protested, officials blocked foreign journalists from entering the city and local media were reportedly detained. Telephone and internet links were cut.

This is a country with two competing governments, but a barely functioning state. The coalition of militias under warlord Khalifa Haftar in the east competes with the UN-recognised Government of National Accord in the west. Those who rule pursue wealth and power, with scant regard for 7 million Libyans reeling from years of dictatorship, revolution, civil war and political deadlock. Incompetent, corrupt and callous governments rely on others - even teenage Scouts - to do their duties, while caging and repressing civil society.

Now many fear that political leaders will exploit the crisis to enrich themselves and delay elections. Mr Haftar is already entrenching his power and that of his family. His son Saddam has been put in charge of the disaster response committee; the international community will be coordinating with a man whose forces took "substantial quantities" of cash and silver belonging to the central bank, according to UN experts, and have carried out a "catalogue of horrors", including war crimes, according to Amnesty International.

Libyans at home and abroad have had enough. They want an international inquiry into the disaster and the response, looking at the role of authorities in both power centres. Any domestic inquiry will at best find scapegoats, and they do not expect cooperation with foreign investigators. But political elites have enjoyed complete impunity for the last decade - not even having to justify failures and crimes. Derna's tragedy has thrown the spotlight upon their behaviour. An inquiry would at least highlight their actions and inaction, essential information for Libyans; it might play some part in preventing future catastrophes; and it would confront western governments with their own responsibility.

A new paper from the Chatham House thinktank, focusing on Libya, Iraq and Lebanon, notes that international policymakers "have repeatedly prioritized 'stability' over accountability. The resulting settlements (or 'elite bargains') have instead created and perpetuated political systems that benefit those elites at the expense of citizens." The paper's authors, Dr Renad Mansour, Tim Eaton and Dr Lina Khatib, argue that such deals have reduced direct violence, but overlooked structural forms of violence and have failed to improve, or even worsened, corruption and human development scores. Increasing accountability, they argue, must be a key part of reaching political settlements. Libya's leaders have dodged that until now. But nothing less is owed to the lovers, friends, dreamers and strivers of Derna.

The west is slowly waking up to a new global order

Nathalie Tocci



It came as an unpleasant surprise to many in Europe and North America that so many countries - many more than the 30 or so that abstained in UN votes condemning Russia for its invasion of Ukraine - refused to go along with sanctions against Putin's Russia. Forty countries sanction Russia, but two-thirds of the world's population live in countries that do not.

This split emerged starkly again at the recent G20 summit in India. A consensus could only be reached on a watered-down statement that referred to the "war in Ukraine" without mentioning Russia's aggression.

This is not to say that countries that sat on the sidelines all back Russia's invasion. The G20 statement, in fact, explicitly rejected the use of force in violation of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, it does mean that they consider this to be a European war in which they have no stake, while still suffering its consequences in terms of food and energy security. It means they would prefer the war to end quickly, even if not necessarily justly.

It was eye-opening, then, on a recent trip to Indonesia, to take part as a panellist in a global "town hall" debate on the theme of rebuilding bridges between the global north and south. I was asked: "Why does the west now take a greater interest in the global south?" The bluntness of the question got me thinking.

The questioner was right. The term "global south" is suddenly cropping up at almost every gathering in the west. But it is also increasingly used in the south too. Loosely, it includes what used to be called developing countries, and many formerly colonised nations. It includes economic powerhouses such as China and India, mid-sized powers such as Turkey, Brazil and Saudi Arabia, and poor countries that struggle to make their voices heard. Does it make sense to speak of a group that is so heterogeneous? Yes, because these countries share a sense that their independent voices should be heard, rather than being shaped or determined by the west.

To that end, they are building and expanding organisations, such as the recent Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit enlarging the grouping to admit Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The west pays greater heed than it used to also because the global south matters more in international relations. As the Indian scholar Amitav Acharya points out, there is a distinction between the "power south", which represents the engine of global growth, and the "poor south". The crucial question is how to ensure that the latter also has a voice.

Countries in the "power south" are carving out a role in the world through diplomacy, transactional relationships and "multi-alignment" in different organisations. India is a member of the China-led Brics, but also of the Quad (with Japan, the US and Australia). Aspiring to be a leader of the global south, it steered the G20 towards greater inclusivity by inviting the African Union into the group. Turkey is a Nato member but has maintained strong relations with Russia, and seeks to revive the grain deal from which Moscow pulled out.

Ultimately, the war in Ukraine has forced the west to stop ignoring the global south. Russia's invasion has brought to the surface accumulated global anger and resentment towards European countries and the US, whether for centuries of colonialism and neocolonial practices, or for the double standards western countries have so often displayed towards the violations of rights and law in different parts of the world.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine will at some point end. But the north's awakening to the geopolitical power of the southern hemisphere is not - as some of those with me in Indonesia said they feared - a fleeting moment. Some believe the war has made international relationships more fraught and conflicted. I disagree: the war has allowed fossilised resentments to surface. This may not necessarily lead to easier relationships in the future, but perhaps to more honest ones.



Narendra Modi embraces Azali Assoumani, chair of the African Union, at the G20 summit PHOTOGRAPH: UPI/SHUTTERSTOCK

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Nathalie Tocci *is the director of the Italian Institute of International Affairs*

Improve the world, says Murdoch. So why didn't he?

Jane Martinson



It should come as no surprise that Rupert Murdoch has decided to step down from the top of his media empire. Yet the news that the 92-year-old, no longer in the best of health, will not die in the job, as he always suggested he would, came as a huge shock. After a lifetime spent transforming the relatively small Australian print newspaper business he inherited from his father into a global corporation, he stands down ahead of two hugely important elections in both of his adopted homelands, Britain and the US.

The timing of his decision to step down cannot be coincidental. It will be minutely analysed over the weeks ahead. But it is not too soon to consider now what his decision means, not just for his business but for the world of media and politics that he has done so much to influence. If the world before he took over a struggling tabloid newspaper in a grey but proud postwar Britain is the time we will call BM, "before Murdoch", what will the morning and the new epoch, AM, or "after Murdoch", look like?

If the old man gets his way, it will be more of the same, and there will always be a Murdoch in charge of the news organisations most connected to those in power, whether that be Fox TV in the US or the Times and the Sun newspaper groups in the UK.

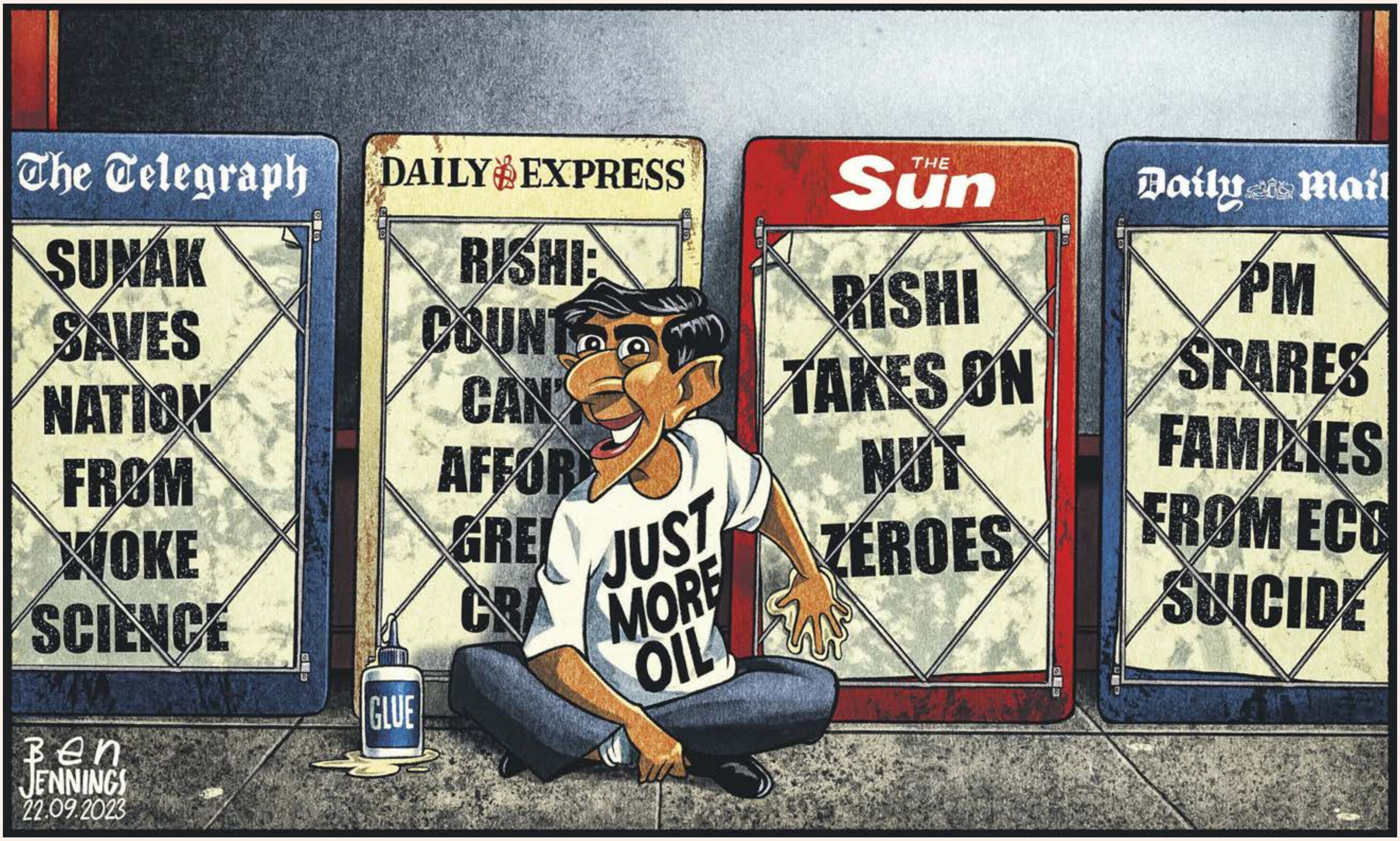
In a letter to all staff published yesterday, surprising in the warmth of its tone, Murdoch made it clear that there should be no guessing who his successor should be, placing his third child and eldest son as the obvious heir. "My father firmly believed in freedom, and Lachlan is absolutely committed to the cause," he wrote about the new chairman of his media empire.

But that could make the AM era an uneasy one for anyone who hoped the Murdoch transition would bring a liberal shift, or at least a retreat from illiberalism. Lachlan's own politics are considered more libertarian and rightwing than even his father's, and definitely his siblings'. Rupert's note made it clear Lachlan shared the contempt for those he described as "self-serving bureaucracies". Witness the delusion of a multibillionaire who bragged of "going in through the back door" of No 10 and a man courted by so many political leaders railing against the "elite".

He is not completely going away of course, and did warn his staff that he would be watching with a critical eye, reading newspapers and websites. But it will be different. When he calls in the early hours of the morning, the lieutenants may not care quite so much about his diatribes.

Murdoch leaves behind a media and political age that he himself has shaped: an age in which norms are shredded and the powerful have access sufficient to dictate the wants and desires of people's lives.

He ends his letter by urging his thousands of staff to "make the most of this great opportunity to improve the world we live in". That, over the decades, was his opportunity. Who can honestly say he took it?



Want domestic bliss? Head to Scandinavia

Helen Russell



And lo! As we all return to school, it turns out that women in Britain are still doing more housework than men. The new British social attitudes survey has just been published, and it reveals that although a majority of Britons agree that adult couples sharing a home should do equal amounts of housework, two-thirds of them admitted that women ended up doing much more. Italian and Spanish women have it worse (*Mi dispiace/Lo siento*). But my adopted Nordic homeland is - apparently - winning, and there's much that Britons can learn from the way things are done here.

Since moving to Denmark in 2013, I've noticed a rhythm to Danish life that's more conducive to the equal division of labour. Both sexes work and get paid a decent wage. And from the age of 10 months, all children go to tax-subsidised, state-run daycare. Most daycare institutions and offices are open from 8am until 4pm, and this has defined the way Danes work. So even the CEO of a company is allowed to say in a meeting at 4pm: "I have to leave to pick up the kids and make dinner." And they go home to eat as a family.

Most Danish men have a signature bake up their sleeves and the Danish equivalent of Jamie Oliver is Timm Vladimir, a tattooed Viking in a leather apron. Most Danes also take huge pride in their homes, so don't mind doing a whiz round with a vacuum cleaner. The weekend living supplements have not been lying: Danes love a chic minimalist home, so no one puts up with clutter or cobwebs.

Researching Nordic childhoods for my new book, I've discovered that Vikings learn their way around a kitchen from an early age. My five-year-old twins learned to bake bread at kindergarten. Their big brother attends a weekly "food lab" at school where he has learned to rustle up messy yet edible scrambled eggs and porridge. In Denmark, a quarter of all teenagers attend a subsidised residential boarding school, or *efterskole*, for a year or more from the age of 14, where they learn to cook, clean and launder for themselves. Although they offer general education, the primary task of *efterskole* is to prepare you for life. A teacher friend tells me she can spot *efterskole* alumni a mile away in her equivalent of A-level classes: "They're much more grounded and mature."

Nordic people aren't nailing it because they live in a magical fairyland where everyone loafs around enjoying hot drinks and *hygge*. They're nailing it because governments have implemented family-friendly policies to make equality happen. The generous parental leave and subsidised daycare, funded by taxes, mean Nordic women are better supported. Dads throughout the Nordic countries change nappies, cook and do the daycare run - so much so that any dad who doesn't is not regarded as a real man. Sweden was the first country to introduce shared parental leave, in 1974, and Swedish fathers use the most parental leave in the world. In the late 1950s there were a million "housewives" in Sweden, according to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. Now the term is practically obsolete - and there's no desire from women to go back there.

Almost every father spends time at home now. If you don't, it's thought of as a bit strange. There's even a nickname, *latte papas*, used to describe the well turned out dads hanging out in coffee shops with a baby in tow. This was *not* a change driven by fathers. The change happened because politicians dared to push for it.

Brave politicians making unpopular decisions for the greater good: now there's a thought. There's an economic imperative, too. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Union and the World Economic Forum all encourage member nations to guarantee their workers paid parental leave and subsidised daycare because shared parental leave has been shown to be good for economic growth (let's get T-shirts printed! Or tattoos! Who's in?).

Equality is now ingrained in Nordic culture - no wonder these countries are among the happiest in the world. Equality works. And nothing's sexier than a man in Marigolds. So, let's teach our sons to mop, iron, clean and do laundry. Future employers, partners, flatmates and the world at large will thank us for it. And, if they don't learn - well, you could send them to Denmark.

Helen Russell *is the author of The Year of Living Danishly*

Letters

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Country diary

Langstone, Hampshire

As I walked into town, the crunch of beech mast underfoot made me glance down. My eyes were immediately drawn to a plump, green hawkmoth caterpillar undulating across the pavement. It's common for the mature larvae to leave their natal food plants and go wandering in search of a place to pupate in loose soil beneath their host tree, but this individual was perilously close to the edge of the kerb and, with a steady stream of oncoming traffic, I didn't fancy its chances if it attempted to cross.

Crouching down, I gently coaxed it on to my finger, looking around for somewhere safe to relocate it. Unfortunately, it was a barren stretch of road, the bordering gardens enclosed by tall brick walls.

At first sight, I suspected it was an eyed hawkmoth larva, which feeds on sallow, willow and apple. Since I have a number of crab and culinary apple trees in my garden, I decided to turn back and release it there. As I waited to cross the road, passing motorists glanced quizzically at my cupped hands. It was only a five-minute walk, but the caterpillar was very active, pirouetting around and rearing up in a defensive posture, its head weaving from side to side. As it inched its way across my palm it gripped my skin, the tiny barbs on its feet attaching like Velcro.

Arriving home, I was able to examine the creature more closely and began to question my initial identification. It was an impressive specimen, its body the length of my thumb. Like most species of hawkmoth caterpillar, it sported a stubby tail horn. This individual's was curved like a rose thorn and turquoise blue, characteristic of both eyed hawkmoth and lime hawkmoth larvae. Both species have pale oblique stripes along their sides and can develop small red subdorsal markings but, as I was informed after posting photos on a natural history forum, the warty yellow tubercles on its anal flap were a distinguishing feature of the lime.

Commonly found in parks and gardens, lime hawkmoth larvae feed on a variety of deciduous trees, so I was able to encourage the wanderer on to the foliage of my silver birch.

Claire Stares

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The steps we must take to rescue our footpaths

The Ramblers' report into public footpaths (Fancy a ramble? It's easier if you are white and well off, says study, 20 September) highlights an injustice. But this is a problem with a long backstory and it's about more than lost rights of way. Before the coming of the motorcar, pedestrians used the roads to get about the country, sharing them for many centuries with riders and horse-drawn vehicles. When you read the chronicles of some of our greatest walkers – Coleridge, Keats and, even as recently as 1913, Edward Thomas – it's clear that they are mostly walking on roads, not footpaths.

The car, backed by massive state investment, has progressively pushed walkers off the roads and left them with nowhere else to go.

It's time to right that wrong, but it's not enough to have a patchwork of old rights of way: we need a meaningful network that connects where people are to the places they want to go.

Tony Hufton
Norwich

● It is no surprise to me that Liverpool is among the bottom five local authorities for provision of public footpaths in England and Wales. Over 60 years ago, as youngsters we would use a popular footpath to walk from Orrell Park past Walton jail to the local public library in Walton. The same path, later confirmed as a public footpath, was also a popular safe off-road walking route to Rice Lane school.

Not any more. Despite a courageous campaign by my late brother, Tony Birtill (Obituary, 10 February 2022), it was gated off by the council at the behest of local property owners, supported by compliant councillors.

Public footpaths only work if they connect up neighbourhoods. Long-established footpaths should always take priority over opportunistic residents seeking advantage for their properties. If residents don't like a footpath, they should move somewhere else.

John Birtill
Guisborough, North Yorkshire

● As well as the unequal access to public footpaths in local communities, the lack of public transport, particularly in rural and county council authorities, is also a major barrier for many to be able to enjoy the benefits of walking farther afield.

Getting people out of cars through a coordinated walking and public transport strategy would also contribute to protecting the environment. But this approach seems highly unlikely given the government's softening on net zero pledges, including their opposition to low emission zones (which would make local walking more attractive and healthy), the delay in banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, and the lack of investment in public transport.

Mike Stein
Pudsey, West Yorkshire

● It's interesting to see that the provision of footpaths in Norwich is allegedly so poor. Having moved here from the Peak District where she had to drive to access the GP, shops or cinema, my mother-in-law now walks everywhere. The centre of the city is completely pedestrianised. Indeed the first street ever pedestrianised in the UK is in Norwich. There are many parks and footpaths along the river which are used as integral parts of people's daily routines, not just as places to "go for a walk".

May I respectfully suggest that the Ramblers re-examine their methodology.

Kathy Moyse
Wacton, Norfolk

Magic power of music for people with dementia

My experience of the magic that Matthew Seager experienced at Berkeley Court stretches back even further (A moment that changed me: I found my goal in life playing My Way in a care home, 20 September). Alongside my main business of singing at weddings at parties, I have been singing in care homes for the past 16 years. I shared Matthew's trepidation approaching my early gigs, and one of the first ones nearly put me off for good when, in a lull between songs, one resident screamed out from the back of the room: "Dear God, make it stop!"

But I persisted, and I am so glad that I did. I have shared Matthew's sense of wonder at witnessing the effect that music has on people. Not quite on the scale that he saw at that care home in 2013, but so many individual moments. I've seen people who staff knew to be almost mute on a day-to-day basis joining in with every word of every song I've sung. I've seen the scowling and argumentative turn from railing against having to sit and listen to me perform to smiling and singing loudly in an instant, as if a switch had been thrown. In fact I see this at pretty much every gig I do, and I've done hundreds over the years.

To see the power of music in this way close up is a humbling experience. To be able to do it for a living is a privilege.

Simon Partridge
Lichfield, Staffordshire

● Matthew Seager's tale of lighting up dementia patients with singalong music brought back poignant memories of my sister with Alzheimer's in her wonderful nursing home. Towards the end of her life and in lockdown, when we were unable to visit, the lovely care assistant would enable contact via FaceTime. My two sisters and I years ago had been used to singing the Beverley Sisters' song Sisters as our party piece. So I discovered a recording and played it on FaceTime to my sister. We both sang along and she remembered the words, which was astonishing. The power of music is immense.

Catherine Roome
Staplehurst, Kent

● I'm delighted that Matthew Seager is no longer anxious about being with people with dementia. I have now made a mental note to add to my future "do not resuscitate" tattoo one that says "no Sinatra – only Springsteen will do".

Sally Cheseldine
Balerno, Edinburgh

Cheap bus trips save pennies and planet

I loved reading Steve Rose's article (No money? No problem!, 20 September) as he travelled 62 miles across Luxembourg on public transport for free. It's not quite the same in generosity or vision, but, since the spring, English and Welsh rural buses have capped journeys at £2. "Get around for £2" has saved me heaps – and felt really good value.

If only it was as well promoted as the new range of e-vehicles. Sadly, the £2 bus cap ends on 31 October and then it will be £2.50 until November 2024.

Nicola Baird
Author, The Estate We're In: Who's Driving Car Culture?

● At a Fabian conference in March 1900, the following motion was debated: "Municipalities should try the experiment of making their tramways free up to eight o'clock." Maybe after 123 years it's worth a try.

Tim Mansfield
Galgate, Lancashire

● I am not sure that I should be saying this, but free travel means no need for ticket offices.

Simon Fowler
Lamberhurst, Kent

Corrections and clarifications

● An article (Sheffield music fans protest over future of Leadmill venue, 19 September, p9) misattributed comments from Rob Unwin, a tenant of Scotia Works in Sheffield, to its property manager, Martin Pickles.

● We said Russell Brand was sacked by the BBC in 2008 after leaving offensive voicemails for the actor Andrew Sachs. In fact, Brand resigned (Inquiry to include cars paid for by broadcaster, Davie pledges, 20 September, p12).

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Leaving old Durham 'town' on wrong river

Re Roger Whittaker (Obituary, 21 September), is there any record of how the miners in north-east England's working men's clubs – where he plied his early trade – reacted to his implicit relocating of Durham to the banks of the Tyne in his hit song Durham Town (the Leavin')? The city of Durham is on the River Wear, by the way.

Pete Lawson
Sunderland

● Speaking at the top of the Shard on 29 December 2049, the prime minister said: "My government is committed to achieving net zero, but with the current heatwave, and with London under several metres of seawater, this is not to the time to take measures that might upset our surviving voters" (Green bonfire as PM rows back on net zero targets, 21 September).

Dave Dalton
Oxford

● I found it interesting that a horse called Zero Carbon was listed as a non-runner in the 7pm race at Chelmsford on Thursday.

Alastair Gilmour
Gateshead

● There are calls for hard-hitting tactics and graphic images on packaging to promote healthier lifestyles (Report, 16 September). I hope we can now expect images of devastating floods and raging forest fires on airline boarding passes and on steakhouse menus.

John Lovelock
Bristol

● While we are discussing bringing back dog licences (Letters, 21 September), could we extend them to cats? Gardeners and wildlife conservationists will know what I mean.

John Brooke
Bewdley, Worcestershire







Johaar Mosaval

South African dancer who was the first person of colour to join the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet

The South African ballet dancer Johaar Mosaval, who has died aged 95, was the first dancer of colour to join the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in London, later to become the Royal Ballet. As well as abundant natural talent, he demonstrated resilience and determination as a black, Muslim boy from a poor family, wanting to make a career in dance. He joined the company in 1952 and was with them for more than two decades, rising to principal after six years.

Mosaval delighted audiences with his speed, personality and fast-footed technique, in roles including the Blue Boy in Frederick Ashton's Les Patineurs, the can-can dancer in Léonide Massine's La Boutique Fantasque and the Bluebird in Sleeping Beauty. In Ashton's The Dream he made "the most captivating and dazzling" Puck, wrote James Kennedy in the Guardian in 1967.

The ballerina Brenda Last was partnered with Mosaval on her first week in the company, and they went on to dance many crowd-pleasing pas de deux together. "I found him a wonderful person to work with," she said. "He was so dedicated to the art form and he was someone that you could rely on as a partner. It was brilliant to do the Neapolitan dance with him in Swan Lake, with his brilliant footwork and speed; it almost brought the house down at times."

Mosaval was a small, quick, sparky dancer who often played comic roles, including Widow Simone in La Fille Mal Gardée and Dr Coppélius in Coppélia. For the South African choreographer John Cranko, Mosaval danced the role of Jasper, the pot boy whose adoration is rejected by the titular Pineapple Poll, and in 1954 he created the role of Bootface the clown in The Lady and the Fool. "As the little clown, you had such empathy with him," Last said. "Every role he did he took it over and made it his own. It was never just another show."

> **His dance school in Cape Town was closed because he refused to operate under apartheid rules**

Cranko also cast Mosaval in the opera Gloriana, created by Benjamin Britten for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 and performed at the Royal Opera House. Mosaval danced a solo for an audience of dignitaries that included presidents Harry S Truman and Charles de Gaulle, the Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and "every king and queen of the world", as he remembered it: "Dancing on stage you could see the flickering of the tiaras."

Mosaval's success in Britain was in stark contrast to the challenges he faced in apartheid-era South Africa. A member of the Cape Malay community, of south-east Asian heritage, he was born in the District Six area of Cape Town. Under apartheid laws he would have been considered "coloured", but he referred to himself as black.

He was the eldest of 10 children in a poor family; his father, Cassiem, was a construction worker and his mother, Galila, a seamstress. "It was very hard, very difficult, very painful," Mosaval said. "And many a time I felt, shall I continue with this life? But I continued, I wanted to dance."

As a child he was a keen gymnast and took part in pantomimes, but schoolmates laughed at him when he announced his ambition to be a ballet dancer, and dancing was not seen as an acceptable career by his Muslim parents. But they were persuaded by two elders from the local mosque, who saw a glowing report of one of Mosaval's performances. He went on to train with the South African prima ballerina Dulcie Howes, studying for three years at the University of Cape Town's ballet school.

Main pic, Mosaval as Puck in Frederick Ashton's The Dream; top, with Patricia Miller in Pineapple Poll; and, bottom, Mosaval, 'a small, quick, sparky dancer'
JOHAAR MOSAVAL'S PRIVATE COLLECTION

His chance to fulfil his potential came when the British ballet stars Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova visited Cape Town. Wanting to see him perform on stage, they smuggled him into the whites-only Alhambra theatre to audition.

Soon he was on his way to the UK to join the Sadler's Wells Ballet School. On arriving in London, he said: "I felt free. I felt fantastic … at the university ballet school I had to stand at the back alone. [Now] I was free to stand any way I wanted to."

Mosaval graduated into the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet in 1952 and became a principal dancer in 1958, by which time it had been renamed the Royal Ballet Touring Company and then, from 1970, the Royal Ballet New Group.

He did face racism in Britain. Last said: "When you think of what they were going through in South Africa and what he had to put up with here too, it was tough on him." The dancers toured extensively, but when Sadler's Wells/the Royal Ballet visited South Africa in 1954 and 1960 the company was advised to leave him behind, as it was unlikely he would be allowed to perform under apartheid laws, prompting questions being raised in parliament ahead of the 1960 tour, and protests in Cape Town.

In 1975, however, the South African government invited Mosaval home to set up a new ballet school, and he retired from the Royal Ballet to return to Cape Town. But the school was later closed because he refused to operate under apartheid rules.

In 1977 he became the first black dancer to perform at the Nico Malan Opera House (now the Artscape theatre) in Cape Town, although his contract forbade him to touch the white dancers. His achievements were eventually recognised at the highest level in South Africa when he was awarded the gold category of the Order of Ikhamanga in 2019, and an honorary doctorate by the University of Cape Town in 2020.

A show about his life, Dreaming Dance in District Six, was staged at Artscape in March 2023. At the opening, the former South African finance minister Trevor Manuel said: "There are some icons who stand out because they were able to break through, and Johaar was able to break through."

Mosaval is survived by two younger sisters.

Lyndsey Winship

Johaar Mosaval, ballet dancer, born 8 January 1928; died 16 August 2023

Lord Elton

Conservative politician known for moderate views on schools and the Lords

In 1988, when the Thatcher government set up an inquiry into discipline in schools, it was responding partly in populist style and partly following complaints from teaching unions about the dangers their members faced from unruly pupils every day - itself a tactic in pursuit of improved pay and conditions. As the then education correspondent of the Daily Mail, scarcely a week went by when I was not writing lurid tales of classroom violence.

The man the government appointed, Rodney Elton, Lord Elton, himself a former minister, could have been a caricature of the sort of battered teacher featured in the Mail's line drawings accompanying my articles.

Elton, who has died aged 93, was an Old Etonian, tall and thin, blinking behind owlish glasses, with a clipped voice and a mane of prematurely grey hair. He did, however, have the advantage of having taught in a Leicestershire grammar and a boys' comprehensive school in Nottingham, and having lectured at a college of education.

He and a team of teachers assiduously toured schools, took evidence and duly came up with a detailed report and 138 recommendations, which proved a sadly moderate damp squib for government and unions.

The Mail's disappointment was palpable: no return to the cane, no thumbscrews. Instead, as its headline said, it was "a lesson for everyone": teachers and schools should try harder, parents should sign written undertakings of their children's behaviour, local authorities should provide better surroundings, detentions could be used and teachers unable to keep order should be eased out.

Disappointingly, from the unions' and the Mail's point of view, they found indiscipline was not generally a problem: "Violence was not as frequent as we supposed when we started."

Such unshowiness marked Elton's career in government and during 47 years in the House of Lords. He was the son of a Norwegian mother, Dedi Hartmann, and Godfrey Elton, a Labour-supporting Oxford history don who was a friend of Ramsay MacDonald, who was rewarded with a hereditary peerage after the formation of the national government and consequent expulsion from the party.

Born in Headington, Oxford, Rodney was educated at Eton and studied history at New College, Oxford. After national service as an officer in Midlands regiments, he became a farmer in Leicestershire and taught history for 10 years. He contested Loughborough twice unsuccessfully as a Conservative in 1966 and 1970, and succeeded his father as second baron in 1973.

After the 1979 election swept the Conservatives to power, Elton became a junior Northern Ireland minister in charge of education, provoking predictable unionist outrage when he suggested schools might give pupils the day off for the pope's visit. There followed a series of brief ministerial appointments: a year at the Department of Health and Social Security, then two years as a junior Home Office minister, followed by promotion to minister of state in the same department, and finally a year at the Department of the Environment.

There, Elton was given the difficult task of steering the highly contentious legislation abolishing the Greater London Council and the metropolitan boroughs through the upper house. It was regarded as a mark of his emollience, skill and charm that abolition was passed with limited obstruction.

More picturesque was Elton's role in arranging the listing of rare telephone boxes, thwarting British Telecom's plan to replace them with plate-glass kiosks. Only a few of the K3 boxes - designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1929 as a streamlined, concrete version of his earlier domed red boxes - survived, and it was these that were to be saved. One was at London Zoo next to the parrot house and Elton duly put in an appearance, with one of the elephants to make - of course - a trunk call. As a stunt it had its shortcomings: the elephant tore his suit and the box was out of order.

Shortly thereafter, Elton stood down as a minister but his life as an active member of the House of Lords did not end until he finally retired in 2020. He took an active part in debates and could be seen sketching his colleagues, or composing limericks about them as they spoke. Painting was a hobby.

He himself saw the Lords' shortcomings as its membership expanded and its cost increased. In a debate in 2016 he spoke in favour of his bill to reduce the number of peers and hold elections every five years, telling them: "If we do nothing, a growing disillusion with not just us - we are expendable - [nor] with the Westminster model, which is amendable, but with parliamentary democracy itself is at risk." The bill received a second reading but got no further. In 2006, Elton had stood to be speaker of the Lords but was defeated by Lady (Helene) Hayman.

A committed churchman, and leader of a prayer group within the House of Lords, Elton could be outspoken in defence of his faith, calling for anti-blasphemy legislation to be tightened up after Martin Scorsese's film The Last Temptation of Christ was shown on Channel 4 in 1995. He also opposed the easing of Sunday trading laws.

He was married twice, in 1958 to Anne Tilney, with whom he had three daughters, Annabel, Janie and Lucy, and a son, Edward, and, after the marriage was dissolved in 1979, to Susan Gurney, who was a lady of the bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth II.

His wife and four children survive him.

Stephen Bates

Rodney Elton, Lord Elton, born 2 March 1930; died 19 August 2023



Elton outside the Houses of Parliament in 2010
SHUTTERSTOCK

> **"He could be seen sketching colleagues or writing limericks about them as they spoke**

Birthdays

King Sunny Adé, musician, 77; **Andrea Bocelli**, operatic tenor, 65; **Sir Robert Buckland**, Conservative MP, former minister, 55; **John Caird**, stage director, 75; **Nick Cave**, musician and writer, 66; **Prof David Drewry**, Antarctic specialist and former vice-chancellor, Hull University, 76; **Tom Felton**, actor, 36; **Liam Fox**, Conservative MP and former minister, 62;



Sue Perkins, who turns 54 today, appears in the new series of Taskmaster, which started last night on Channel 4

Philip Hindes, cyclist, 31; **Joan Jett**, rock singer, 65; **Ruth Jones**, writer and actor, 57; **Ed Joyce**, cricketer, 45; **Prof Ursula King**, writer and scholar of religions, 85; **Lady (Ruth) Lea**, economist, 76; **Rebecca Long-Bailey**, Labour MP and former shadow minister, 44; **Rupert Penry-Jones**, actor, 53; **Sue Perkins**, comedian and broadcaster, 54; **Mark Phillips**, equestrian trainer, 75; **Billie Piper**, actor, 41; **Ségolène Royal**, French socialist politician, 70; **Prof Harriet Ward**, emeritus professor of child and family research, Loughborough University, 75.

Letter
Gayle Hunnicutt

Your recent obituary on Gayle Hunnicutt (5 September) was comprehensive, although one role that seems to have been missed was that in Twelfth Night at the Greenwich theatre in the 1970s. Gayle was playing Olivia opposite Max Wall. One night Max forgot his lines when greeting Olivia back on stage, so he improvised with, "Ello Olivia!"
Paul Foxall

Announcements

Deaths
MORTIMER, Pat. 14 March 1922 – 29 August 2023. A lifelong socialist; Trades Union and Labour Party activist; and women's rights campaigner. Pat will be much missed but celebrated, by many comrades and friends, and socialism in general; and particularly by Kaisa and Stan who lovingly welcomed her into their family in her later years.

In Memoriam
BLAKE, Charles Graham. Died 24 September 2020. His warm and generous spirit lives on. Remembered every day with untiring love. Alison.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

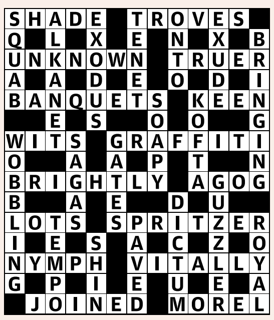
Killer sudoku
Easy

7	9	6	5	1	8	3	4	2
3	4	1	2	9	6	5	7	8
5	8	2	3	7	4	1	9	6
8	1	4	6	2	3	9	5	7
9	6	5	4	8	7	2	1	3
2	3	7	9	5	1	8	6	4
4	5	3	8	6	9	7	2	1
6	7	9	1	3	2	4	8	5
1	2	8	7	4	5	6	3	9

Medium

8	1	4	2	3	5	9	6	7
6	3	9	7	8	4	5	2	1
2	7	5	1	6	9	8	3	4
4	9	1	3	7	8	2	5	6
3	5	6	9	1	2	7	4	8
7	8	2	4	5	6	1	9	3
5	4	3	8	2	7	6	1	9
9	6	8	5	4	1	3	7	2
1	2	7	6	9	3	4	8	5

Codeword



Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,181

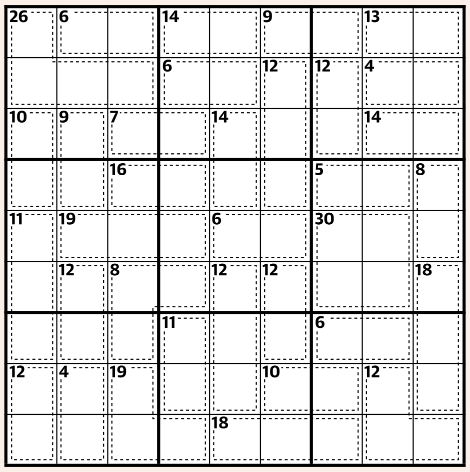


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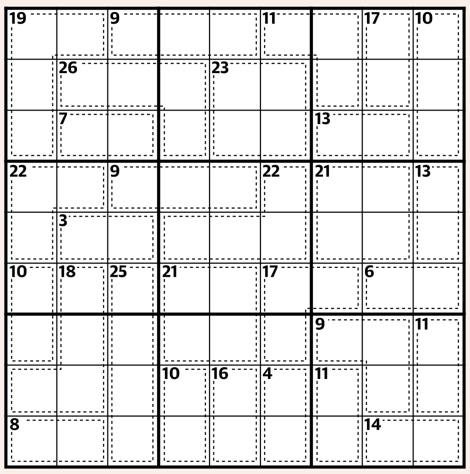
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

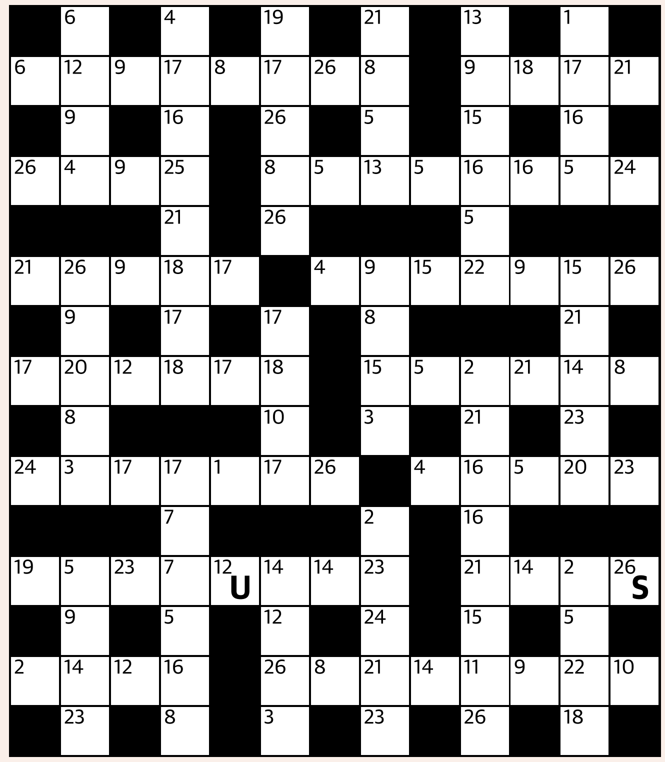


Medium



Codeword

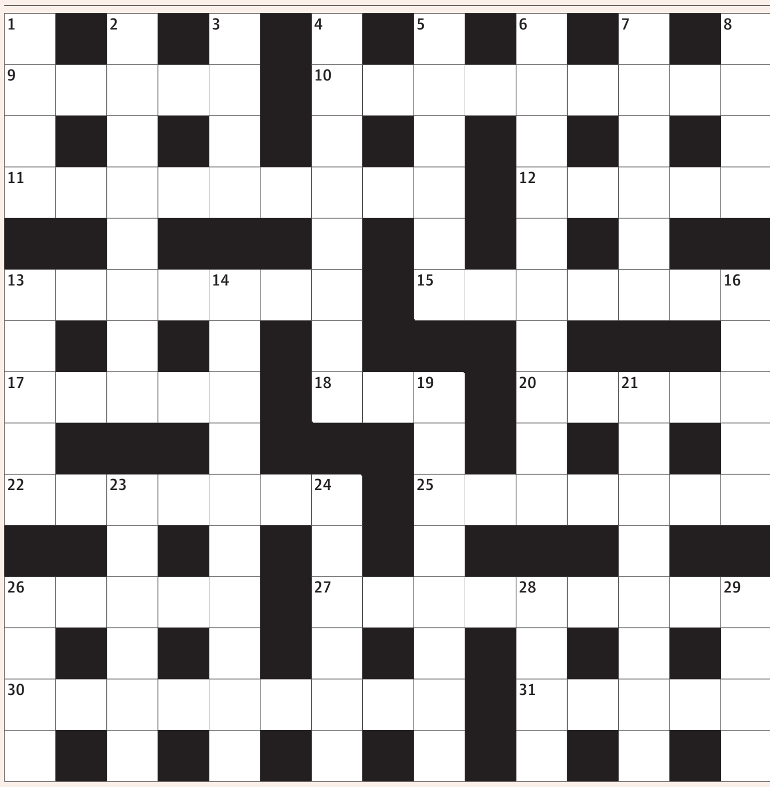
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R ~~S~~ T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12 U	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26 S

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,182 set by Paul



Across

9 Author, I applaud your observation when 5? (5)
10 Go abroad with Iberian native (9)
11 Travel Lodge's opening in sweet marsh to the west (9)
12 Animal they see, Noah seeing every second (5)
13 See 19
15 Work out when filling gone — empty? (7)
17 Club's last, equally true voice (5)
18 Horse and badger (3)
20 Nuts off the menu for Rover? (5)
22 Rusty old, old nails very, very strong, marines concluding (3,4)
25 Fibre ultimately absent, lady keen to knit without threads (7)
26 Cut costs, bound to save money, initially (5)
27 What dog might wish to do to be lifted? (2,7)
30 Careless line failing to impress good man (9)
31 One, two, three *and* four back in house (5)

Down

1 Drink first of sherries, something going to one's head (4)
2 Underwear stocks, say? (8)
3 Dogs, say, misleading guards (4)
4 Shrew lifting bottom, tricky when tail removed earlier (8)
5 Tiddly brief (6)
6 Politician: his being slightly inadequate, hole up when in jeopardy (5,5)
7 Fourth, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth letters, all going to the third, reportedly? (6)
8 Name associated with Facebook article, police onto that (4)
13 Nice one: shocker verboten (5)
14 Similar doctor arrested by dodgy Irish cop (10)
16 Minute completed and day ends (5)
19,13across Like Dorothy's house in 1939 film? (4,4,3,4)
21 Part of football pitch where energy's located? (8)
23,24 Farm egg I tend to put out in kitchen drawer? (6,6)
26 See 28
28,26 Noughts: zero no good as a particular number (4,4)
29 Animal impression (4)

G2
The Guardian



Endgame

Gabriel Byrne on Samuel Beckett, Richard Burton and three days talking to a broom

Friday 22/09/23

Film & Music

Favourite things
Julie Andrews films – ranked!
page 2

Bristol cream
Tricky answers your questions
page 3



Ranked! Julie Andrews films

Ahead of the legendary actor's 88th birthday, Charlotte O'Sullivan looks back at her best roles



1
Mary Poppins *(1964)*
Andrews' very first film performance made her a huge star and bagged her her first Oscar. What a commanding and strange character her supernatural Edwardian nanny is: a woman with a core of puritanical steel and a strong dollop of naughtiness (she even flirts with her own reflection). If it's a crime to love yourself, this character needs locking up – yet Andrews keeps us on side from first to last.

2
The Sound of Music *(1965)*
Robert Wise's musical – an advert for found families – is a kitsch fever dream and did a superb job of showing off Andrews' range. It's a blast to watch her nail the emotional stuff, as well as the songs.

3
The Americanization of Emily *(1964)*
This second world war screwball farce, written by Paddy Chayefsky, is anything but kid-friendly. Emily (Andrews; by turns larky and intense), is a tenderly promiscuous war widow who falls for US Navy official and "practising coward", Charlie (James Garner; on top form). Even today, the script's sex positive stance and contempt for patriotic cant seems bold.



4
Victor/Victoria *(1982)*
In this award-winning musical comedy drama about Victoria (a singer in 1930s Paris who is forced to pretend she's a female impersonator), Andrews' comic timing is reliably delightful. The surprise is the space given to Robert Preston, sublime in a role that can't be reduced to "gay best friend" (You and Me, a duet performed by the pair, is fiercely intimate). Poor James Garner, as Victoria's macho love interest, can't compete.





5
Duet for One *(1986)*
Check out the chemistry between Andrews, as violinist Stephanie, and Liam Neeson in a drama about a feted musician who develops multiple sclerosis and discovers the therapeutic value of no-strings sex. Some shots capture the pure horror of Stephanie's illness. Elsewhere the focus is on the nonsense that perfectly healthy women have to put up with from men.

6
S.O.B. *(1981)*
In Edwards' savage meta-satire, Andrews plays an actor urged to subvert her pristine image and bare her "boobies". Many elements of S.O.B. have aged badly, but Andrews is fabulously fresh and brittle. In her final topless reveal, the expression on her face – the elation of a child who's successfully completed their homework – is priceless.

7
10 *(1979)*
In Blake Edwards' era-defining, if patchy, sex comedy, Dudley Moore's George (a middle-aged, average-looking, composer and pianist) is all too believable trying to bed beach goddess Jenny (Bo Derek) in between quarrelling with actor-singer girlfriend Samantha (Andrews).

8
Shrek 2 *(2004)*
The success of The Princess Diaries got Andrews this gig as the voice of Shrek's fragrant mother-in-law, Queen Lillian, who kissed a frog and liked it. It is a hoot, and the DreamWorks sequel itself, almost as good as the original, is a total joy.





9
The Princess Diaries *(2001)*
Playing Anne Hathaway's royal grandmother was a bona fide comeback for Andrews: surgery in 1997 had permanently scarred her vocal cords and left her needing grief therapy. As Queen Clarisse, Andrews may not sing, but she seems totally comfortable in her own skin.

10
Enchanted *(2007)*
Andrews narration of Disney's live-action/animation hybrid is a small, though deeply satisfying contribution, delivering the line: "And so, they all lived happily ever after" in a way that sounds simultaneously knowing and sincere.

See full list of 20 at theguardian.com/film

Playlist



1 **Jane Remover**
Census Designation
A completely astonishing drum-free emo-noise-pop power ballad, where Jane's sweet vocal is subsumed by a wave of overdriven guitar – it's like corn syrup cut with black pond water.

2 **Troye Sivan**
Got Me Started
Powered by the cutest little Stylophone melody and a two-step garage beat, Sivan follows the huge Rush with another excellent single, taken from (spoiler alert) one of the year's very best pop LPs, out 13 October.

3 **Jeshi**
Air Raid
With gorgeous burbling production and a funny video – Jeshi seshes with a knight in armour – the London rapper tries to find his place in the world via breezy but highly technical flows.

4 **Dua Saleh**
Daylight Falls
Returning to screens as Cal in Sex Education this week, Saleh also releases this epic new single, building from shivery Phil Elverum-type strumming to a giant chorus.

5 **Earl Sweatshirt**
The Caliphate (ft Vince Staples)
Earl's album with producer the Alchemist is getting a full release with three new tracks, including this gorgeously melancholic twilight crawl, Earl steadfast in his self-belief.

6 **Moritz von Oswald**
Infinito
The dub techno grandmaster creates a cathedral-ready composition of sustained choral vocals, eerie, eyrie-high synth and a distant throb of bass.

7 **Laura Veirs**
Rocks of Time
Taken from a forthcoming album of songs drawn from ad hoc voice memos and recorded in her living room, this is a low-key and unfussy folk ballad, but the vocal melodies have granite strength.

PHOTOGRAPH: 20TH CENTURY FOX/ALLSTAR
COVER PHOTOGRAPH: KATA VERMES/SKY UK LTD

The reader interview

‘Prison was less stressful than going on stage’

The legendary Bristolian musician **Tricky** on Beyoncé, his friend Terry Hall and annoying Gary Oldman with a Twix



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

You have previously asserted that your debut album, Maxinquaye, was ruined by its success and turned into a “coffee-table album”. Having revisited it for a deluxe reissue, what are your feelings about it now? *VerulamiumParkRanger*
I can understand why it did what it did at the time, because there was nothing around like it. Years ago, when I was getting frustrated that some people didn’t understand it because it went coffee-table, someone told me: “Tricky, people will catch up with you. You’ve just got to wait.” Now I’ve done 16 albums and when young kids come to my shows, the stuff they talk to me about is [subsequent albums] Angels with Dirty Faces or Pre-Millennium Tension, not Maxinquaye. If I listen to it now, it sounds dated, but if you don’t think your older music sounds dated, you are standing still. Universal made me enthusiastic about the Maxinquaye Reincarnated reissue because they just let me work on it, and they’ve released my reworkings, which is amazing, because these songs are not commercial vehicles. It’s made me less anti-major-labels.

You were the only guest star at Beyoncé’s Glastonbury headline slot in 2011. How did you meet and do you hang out much? *Robot3021*
Somebody asked if I wanted to do it and convinced me I should. I met her beforehand and I thought she’d be more Beyoncé, but she was like the girl next door – really normal and a proper workhorse, rehearsing all day. I froze on stage, because I usually perform in near darkness, but this was bright fucking fireworks and all sorts of shit going on. She came over and started dancing with me. She was so professional. I’m shy. I’m sometimes not very good around big, successful people. We don’t hang out any more.

I heard that Gary Oldman was annoyed with you during the shoot for The Fifth Element because while in character and filming a particularly difficult scene you came on set eating a Twix. Is this true? *Bauhaus66*
It’s true. I don’t know about movies, right? I was in the scene, but I wasn’t being filmed. I was just the person he was talking to. So he was doing his lines and watching me. Then he looks at my mouth and goes: “He’s eating a fucking Twix!”

I saw you supporting PJ Harvey at the Barrowland in Glasgow in 1995. I think it was one of your first live gigs with a band and the first night of the tour. You seemed nervous, but the audience were encouraging. What was it like to take your music out on to a big stage at a rock venue? *TheSurvivalBag*
I was less nervous going to prison [at 17, for buying forged banknotes] than getting on that stage, because playing live was never part of my plan. The next thing I know, I’m on tour with PJ Harvey. I can’t think of worse person to have to go on before, because she is so good. We played in darkness because I was shitting myself. I brought these little lamps on stage and someone from PJ’s band wrote on the poster under my name: “Lights by Ikea.”

Tell me about your friendship with Terry Hall; Poems, on Nearly God, is a dream pairing of musicians. *TeeDubyaBee*
I always knew I’d meet him because I was such a fan. I still can’t believe he’s dead. Once he died, I couldn’t listen to the Specials, like I still can’t look at a photograph of my daughter [Mina Mazy, who killed herself in 2019]. With Terry dying, I feel like part of my growing up has been taken away. We loved each other. I’d say we felt like family to each other. At some point, I’m going to do a Terry covers EP. I’d like to celebrate this man.

> **Rita Marley comparing me to Bob was a bit too much for me. I’m still the kid outside the chip shop**

Your Island Records boss Chris Blackwell’s recent autobiography The Islander didn’t feature any Tricky anecdotes. Have you got any good ones about him? *McScootikins*
Chris is different. I haven’t seen him for a few years, but he is very special in my life. In all the years we hung out, he never once asked: “How many albums are you selling?” Once we were having dinner with Rita Marley and she told me: “You remind me of Bob.” It’s a beautiful thing to say, but made me a bit uncomfortable. I mean, Bob Marley is next level, so that was a bit too much for me. I’m still the kid outside the chip shop.

Whatever happened to that potential Kate Bush collaboration? *blueblueelectricblue*
Chris Blackwell, Jaffe [the visual artist/musician Lee Jaffe] and I were driving. I was smoking a spliff and mentioned that I wanted to work with her and Chris goes: “Oh, that’s Kate’s house.” Jaffe wanted to pull in and Chris is going: “Not now, Jaffe!” Jaffe was all set to knock on the front door!

Send us your questions for next week’s interviewee theguardian.com/culture

In my opinion, Ponderosa is the greatest piece of music of the 90s. What is it about and how did it come about? *mesm*
It’s a sample from an Indian movie. I’ve no idea why it’s called Ponderosa. I don’t know what the lyrics are about either. Lyrics just come into my head. I’ve never had writer’s block in my life. I don’t think we make music. I think music makes us.

Did you ever read what Mark Fisher wrote about you [in the book Ghosts of My Life: “Not a music that petitioned for any kind of ordinariness. Instead, it revelled in its otherworldliness”]? If so, what did you make of it? *Asurea*
No. That title’s uncanny, isn’t it? My aunt always used to say I was more on the other side. I’ve always lived with the ghost of my mum, the legends of my uncles. When you’ve suffered trauma, you go into a kind of dream state and that’s me as a kid. I’m going to get his book.

What do you think Massive Attack could have achieved if you, Mushroom and Shara Nelson had remained members? *wiseowl1982*
I don’t think me staying would have made as much difference, because my music’s stranger. Mushroom [Andrew Vowles] is an incredible producer and can do pop, but he’s a purist. The honest answer is that if Mushroom had stayed, we’d have had more tracks like Teardrop and Unfinished Sympathy and would be the biggest band in the world.

What music do you love that might surprise us? *hhhhssss*
I like all sorts, from Mozart and Beethoven to Albanian folk, but I listen to a lot of Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. Their songs are like movies, about life.

Do you still, or did you ever, “drink ’til you’re drunk and smoke ’til you’re senseless”? *gin007*
Yeah, that’s the problem with my life. Once I was in a blues [party] in Bristol where my uncle had been killed a few months before. I was so drunk and stoned I suddenly thought: “Where did my uncle die? Was it here? Was it there?” I smoke a lot less now and rarely drink unless it’s an occasion. If I get really drunk, it takes me two weeks in the gym to recover and I can’t be bothered with recovering that way now.
As told to Dave Simpson
Maxinquaye Reincarnated is out on 13 October in triple LP, LP, double CD and digital formats.

‘The hate is as strong as the love’

Blonde Redhead are back with their first album in nine years. They tell **Stevie Chick** how infighting, illness and anxiety almost destroyed the band

Sit Down for Dinner, a record of deftly anxious songs about loss, is among Blonde Redhead’s finest work.

In many respects, this is remarkable, given the new record comes after an absence of almost a decade - and after Kazu Makino thought she had “walked away from the band for ever”.

The experience of self-releasing the band’s 2014 album, Barragán, had left the singer and guitarist “decimated, financially and physically”, while long-simmering tensions between Makino and her bandmates, the twin brothers Amedeo (guitar and vocals) and Simone Pace (drums), had grown intolerable. “I kept asking myself: ‘Do I have to suffer to make music?’”

But when Amedeo became seriously ill this summer with Lyme disease and a malaria-like infection called babeosis, Makino “truly panicked - I don’t think I would have a life without him”.

We are talking in July at the hotel in London where Makino is staying. Blonde Redhead were supposed to play this evening, but the gig was cancelled due to Amedeo’s illness. He will soon recover, but Makino has her absent bandmate on her mind. While their connection is impossibly deep, it’s also complex. “The twins are like *real* family,” she says. “The hate and contempt [between us] are as



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On stage in Los Angeles in 2017

strong as the love. I can't even talk to them sometimes."

They met in New York in the early 90s. Makino had fled Kyoto, specifically her parents' attempts to "sabotage" her musical ambitions. The Pace twins were born and raised in Italy and studied jazz at Berklee College of Music in Boston before relocating to New York.

A mutual friend thought the trio should play together, remembers Amedeo via a video call alongside Simone later in the summer. "But Kazu was worried about being in a band with twins." Amedeo, meanwhile, was anxious they wouldn't find common ground. "I loved jazz and wanted to improvise; Simone was immersed in Brazilian music. And Kazu had her own rebel ideas, influenced by My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth."

The intensity with which they pursued their music also set them apart. Makino remembers crying in frustration at every rehearsal "because I felt inadequate", while Amedeo blames their inability to keep a bassist on their failure to find a fourth member who "could stand our chemistry".

It didn't help that Amedeo and Makino were lovers; their on/off relationship spanned the group's first decade or so. "It wasn't easy for them," says Simone. "They lived together, so there was no escape. Lots of fights, lots of emotion. We even tried therapy, all three of us, to figure out a healthier way to deal with each other."

This friction bled into Blonde Redhead's music. Their chaotic and captivating third album, 1997's Fake Can Be Just As Good, opened with Kazuality, Amedeo's ode to their all-engulfing relationship ("Timeless fire that burns / Me to you, you to me"), while on stage the pair often seemed on the brink of combat, parrying guitar necks and colliding into each other. "It wasn't an act," Makino says. "We fought all the time. It was dreadful."

They dialled back the aural melee, beginning with 1998's In an Expression of the Inexpressible, and found new power in restraint, broadening their palette with primal influences they had previously "repressed with noise".

Amedeo says: "I remember our mum playing classical and jazz organ records that affected me a lot. They were dark, sad and very harmonically beautiful."

Those words perfectly describe 2004's Misery Is a Butterfly. Its production had been delayed after Makino, a keen equestrian, sustained horrific injuries when she was trampled by her horse. "The accident destroyed my jaw," she remembers. "I was laid out for so long. My mouth was wired shut - I couldn't sing. I told Ame: 'You should sing my songs instead.'" But he refused and, as they waited for her to recover, the album evolved.

"Once it was finished, I hated it," says Makino, laughing. "It felt like a big stick of butter; it was so rich." But she soon made her peace with what would become the group's most acclaimed release. "I hate music that is simply pretty," she says. "But Serge Gainsbourg wrote insanely beautiful music that was brutal at the same time, because of his suffering." Blonde Redhead's new sound was similarly affecting, the cacophony of their earlier records now absent, but their signature longing, introspection and anguish hauntingly intact.

The group continued to explore this sound, but Makino struggled with her self-worth, doubting whether, hypothetically, she could make music without the twins. After Barragán, though, she recorded a solo album, 2019's Adult Baby. "It was liberating for me - I was flying the whole time," she says. "You can have a lot of fun making music; I proved that to myself."

Their time apart has bred a respect for what they can achieve alone. Amedeo speaks admiringly of Makino's "determination" on this album, working solo in the studio as she sheltered with their engineer during lockdown, while Makino praises Amedeo's craft.

The result is a suite of melancholy pop that sings of very adult concerns, of problems without easy solutions, with characteristic honesty. The title track was inspired by Makino's mother's dementia. "My mother was passing between madness and sanity. She said: 'I worked so hard all my life; I should be able to choose the way I go.' All I could tell her was: 'I'm sorry, Mummy, you're right, you don't deserve this.'"

In her creative life, however, the past few years have been validating. She has proved her mettle with her solo album and found a way to make Blonde Redhead work - to make music without suffering. "Music is who I am," she says. "I don't know if there's any other way of feeling like I'm worthy of anything. Blonde Redhead is three passive-aggressives who need an outlet, and making records is not easy. But this time, I laid down the law: 'I will lose it if we fight making this record.'" She pauses for a moment and smiles. "So we didn't. And it worked quite well."

Sit Down for Dinner is released on 29 September on section1.

> **There were lots of fights, lots of emotion. We even tried therapy, all three of us**



PHOTOGRAPHS: SCOTT DUDELSON/WIREIMAGE; JOHN D SHEARER/BEI/SHUTTERSTOCK



Being Beckett

In his new film, Gabriel Byrne embodies the dark genius of 20th-century theatre. He tells **Claire Armitstead** how he did it – and the advice he received from Richard Burton

In 1969, Samuel Beckett and his wife learned that he had won the Nobel prize in literature in a telegram from his publisher. “Dear Sam and Suzanne,” it read. “In spite of everything, they have given you the Nobel prize. I advise you to go into hiding.” Both were notoriously celebrity averse. Suzanne described it as a “catastrophe”. Beckett declined to give a Nobel lecture, and refused to talk when a Swedish film crew tracked him down to a hotel room in Tunisia, leaving them with a surreal mute interview.

Into this temporal void, a new psychological biopic has poured a monumental reckoning, in which the 63-year-old playwright scrambles out of the Nobel ceremony to find himself in a rough-hewn underworld. In Dance First, a small masterpiece that premieres next month at the San Sebastian film festival, Beckett confronts the events and the people that shaped



Dance class … Byrne (centre) with director James Marsh and Sandrine Bonnaire

him, from his domineering mother to his experience with the French resistance, his brief dalliance with James Joyce’s daughter, Lucia, to his later inability to choose between Suzanne and the radio producer and translator Barbara Bray.

“You know this is going to be a journey through your shame,” he solemnly informs himself. “Isn’t everything?” he replies. It’s interior monologue played as dialogue, presenting an unusual challenge for the actor Gabriel Byrne, who found himself in an old quarry outside Budapest for three days, speaking to a broom.

“Well yes, that was difficult,” he says over video from his farmhouse in Maine. It wasn’t that the idea of speaking to himself was alien – far from it. “I’d spent my entire life talking to myself: even when I was a child in Dublin, I used to walk around the streets doing it, and if somebody walked past me, I’d pretend I was singing. But technically it was difficult because



you had to do one guy here. And then you had to turn around and become the other guy. So the brush was standing there and you had to talk to the brush. And then you stood where the brush was and talked to … a brush."

It's as if the ghost of Beckett himself is hovering over Byrne's shoulder as he describes the scene, a genuine desire to explain meeting the comedy of exasperation, as he realises that the only way to get his meaning across is to repeat the word brush. It is a small failure of verbal economy that is rendered both funny and telling, in an entirely Beckettian way, by a momentary pause. These things matter to Byrne, who proved himself a writer as well as an actor with a lyrical memoir, Walking With Ghosts, followed by a solo show he based on it, which transferred from Dublin to London's West End last year.

Apart from a "thrice broken nose", which gives him a passing resemblance in profile to beaky Beckett, the genial, award-winning actor looks nothing like the creased and gimlet-eyed seer that the playwright had become by the time of his Nobel win. "I was really happy when I read the script, because it's not trying to present a cradle-to-grave biography. I didn't have to do it with wire glasses, and grey hair standing up on end, and lose maybe 30 pounds," says Byrne. And yet such is the power of the storytelling that within minutes you believe in him entirely.

"Gabriel was the first choice I made. He's had a very interesting career and hasn't pigeonholed himself at all," says director James Marsh, who began following Byrne's career years before The Usual Suspects made him a Hollywood star – starting with his role as an ambitious young journalist in the 1985 parliamentary conspiracy thriller Defence of the Realm.

Dance First takes its name from a line in Waiting for Godot that has passed not quite correctly into literary lore as "Dance first, think later". (The exact formulation, articulated by the tramp Estragon about the titular Godot, is "Perhaps he could dance first and think afterwards.") It is the first feature of Scottish screenwriter Neil Forsyth – best known recently for the TV heist series The Gold – and arrived, unsolicited, on Marsh's desk, during the pandemic.

"As soon as I read it, I saw Gabriel in it," says Marsh, whose Oscar-winning biopic The Theory of Everything, concerned another chewy genius – Stephen Hawking. "Obviously to play Beckett is quite daunting for an Irish actor, because he is so much part of their literary canon, but he didn't need persuading and immediately approached it with great seriousness. He was a very nice presence on the set."

In all his decades as one of Ireland's most successful acting exports, this is the first time Byrne has had anything to do professionally with Beckett's work,



Prize fighter … Beckett's Nobel win takes him on a 'journey through his shame'

"Beckett was not talking from the top of a mountain but from the depths of his soul

and he is dismissive of some of the productions he has seen, notably Waiting for Godot in New York in 1988, starring Robin Williams and Steve Martin: "There was one moment when I thought: this is meant to be funny. Yet here are two of the funniest men on the planet, and they haven't raised a laugh between them."

There's a reverence for Beckett that gets in the way of the humanity of his work, Byrne believes. He says "it happens with Eugene O'Neill, too", whose plays have been something of a Byrne speciality. "People are so in awe of what they represent, that they surrender to that awestruck notion that these men are speaking from the top of a mountain. But Beckett was not speaking from the top of a mountain but from the depths of his soul. And the way he expressed himself was through this pared down language, expressing the deepest and most complex of feelings and thoughts about what it means to be human."

He wouldn't have done the film if it had been a conventional autobiography, he says: "How do you tell somebody's life in an hour and a half? It's not possible. A lot of these biopics depend on the likeness of the actor to the person they're playing. And it becomes about an impersonation, structured around the highlights of the person's life. There's nothing wrong with trying to do a film like that. But I think the braver course was to do something that tried to encapsulate what Beckett was as a human being."

He applied the same principles to his own life in his memoir. "Memory is so unreliable," he says. "It doesn't have a structure to it. It doesn't have a linear quality. It comes for a couple of seconds and disappears. And you've no idea when it's going to come again. The present and the past are always overlapping. I was interested in finding out: what were the moments? What were the feelings that I felt defined the journey of my life?"

One such moment was at the Cannes premiere of The Usual Suspects, which threw him into an existential crisis from which he awoke in a hotel room many miles away, after praying for days to a God in whom he no longer believed.

The terror of finding himself catapulted into the celebrity stratosphere chimed with a conversation he recalled with Richard Burton from years earlier on the set of a starry television miniseries about the composer Richard Wagner. Byrne – an unknown, fished off the dole to deliver "10 lines in six countries" as the composer's despised patron – had suffered the indignity of a cut lip when a makeup assistant attempted to adjust his glued-on moustache on board a rowing-boat. "'Hey lippy,'" said Burton, afterwards, "'Come and have a drink.'"

Fame, Burton told him, doesn't change who you are. It changes others. "He was talking about the existential malaise of success, what it means that you come to the brink, and there's nothing but this huge cliff that brings you to nowhere," says Byrne now.

A less promising encounter with Laurence Olivier on the same set, when Byrne accosted the actor, unaware that he was trying to memorise his lines, led to another piece of wisdom that he has carried with him through his life. In apology for his brusque brush-off, Olivier sent him a note quoting lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet 60, about minutes hastening to their end. "He was telling me about time. And of course, now I'm much more conscious of what he was talking about. As Beckett knew, how foolish it is to try to mark time, when time has no mercy whatsoever."

There's a strong sense as he speaks that his relationship with Beckett is not over; is it possible, now that the dance of filming is over, that he is thinking of taking it into his own hands – perhaps into another one-man show? "Yes", he says, "I did think about that. Then I lay down again, and I dozed off. But it's an interesting idea. And if it does happen, I blame you."

I promise him that I'll be there on the first night with a bunch of wilting roses. "You might be the only person in the audience," he replies, striking the funny side of morose with the timing of a natural-born Beckettian.

Dance First premieres at the San Sebastian film festival on 29 and 30 September, is in UK cinemas in November, on Sky Cinema in December and on Sky Arts in 2024.



Samuel Beckett on the set of 1965's Film, his only screenplay

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATA VERMES/SKY UK LTD/2LE MEDIA; JC RAPOPORT/GETTY IMAGES



Peter Bradshaw's film of the week

RMN



Fear and loathing in rural Romania

★★★☆☆

Dir *Cristian Mungiu*

Starring *Marin Grigore, Judith State, Macrina Bârlădeanu*

127 mins **Cert** *15*

Palme d'Or winner 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days director Cristian Mungiu returns with this psychodrama of central European xenophobia: a Brexity hostility that has taken up residence in the brains of people in a multi-ethnic region of Transylvania. They are people who can't decide which racial identity among their neighbours they dislike the most, or how much to dislike the EU from which so much financial help still comes, and whose richer countries are very racist towards them. RMN is an essay on a kind of crisis in the racist mindset: when and how do you suppress your dislike of one kind of people to make common cause with them against some other kind?

The setting is a village where Romanians, ethnic Hungarians and German-speakers have lived together reasonably calmly for 30 years. Matthias (Marin Grigore) is a hatchet-faced guy who has had to abandon his job in a German slaughterhouse after assaulting the racist foreman. Now back in his home town and unemployed, Matthias is coldly received by his wife Ana (Macrina Bârlădeanu) because he is still having an affair with another woman, the stylish Hungarian Csilla (Judith State), who plays the cello and manages a modern hi-tech bakery with the help of EU grants. The town's quarrelling people are coming together to express their bigoted loathing of the Sri Lankans Csilla has hired – no locals responded to the job ads. (Like Matthias, the men are more interested in the bigger pay packets to be had in Germany, among people who look down on them.) Meanwhile, Matthias's sick father has to have an MRI scan (in Romanian a "rezonanta magnetica nucleara", or RMN).

Most disturbing for Matthias is that his son Rudi (Mark Blenyesi) has been struck speechless by something he witnessed in the bleak surrounding woodland. What has Rudi seen? A wild animal? One of the illegal immigrants? Some kind of terrible premonition?

Matthias has now taken to carrying his rifle everywhere. And he is brooding over his father's brain-scan images, which he has downloaded to his phone.

Mungiu's storytelling style is as unemphatic and low-key as ever, and he has an arresting keynote scene in which a "town meeting" is convened; this is shown in one continuous static shot. RMN is a sombre, downbeat movie, whose sudden flurry of dreamlike visions at the end is disconcerting. But it is seriously engaged with the dysfunction and unhappiness in Europe that goes unacknowledged.

Strange Way of Life

★★★★☆

Dir *Pedro Almodóvar*

Starring *Pedro Pascal, Ethan Hawke, Manu Rios*

31 mins **Cert** *15*

Pedro Almodóvar's 30-minute divertissement, starring Pedro Pascal and Ethan Hawke, is a queer western with a hint of kink. Pascal is Silva, a handsome Mexican cowpoke who rides into a remote western town with the resonant name of Bitter Creek. Silva has come to see the sheriff, Jake, played by Hawke.

It is the first time the two men have laid eyes (and much else) on each other for 25 years. After dinner together, during which Jake abandons his teetotalism, the two men's feelings for each other become too intense to resist. The next morning, Silva asks to borrow a pair of Jake's underpants. Almodóvar's lovingly protracted shot of Jake's pristine underwear drawer is an amusing fetish.

There is to be no postcoital glow: Jake instantly regrets succumbing to his desires, because apart from everything else, he is on the trail of Silva's son (George Steane), who he suspects of murder.

Gunplay has long been inspected for its metaphoric content: here, Almodóvar offers us the question of who is doing the shooting, who is getting shot, and what are the sexual and power relations implied by nursing a gunshot wound. I can imagine Strange Way of Life being enlarged into a full-length feature but that might well dilute its impact. There is some very robust and old-fashioned storytelling here and it's certainly good to see Almodóvar back in the saddle.



Expend4bles

★★☆☆☆

Dir *Scott Waugh*

Starring *Jason Statham, Sylvester Stallone, Curtis '50 Cent' Jackson*

103 mins **Cert** *15*

There is room for debate about whether the number 4 in EXPEND4BLES – as the title is rendered on the poster – looks sufficiently like the letter A. Next time, it will be easier with EXPENDABLE5, then three movies later it should be EXPENDA8LES, and for the 50th film they can go for a classy Roman numeral to please the classicists: EXPENDABLES.

Anyway, the lumbering giants of yesteryear action-movie product are back. Sylvester Stallone returns as the team's leader, Barney Ross, but with a limited presence. The de facto leader is Lee Christmas, played once more by Jason Statham, who is the one returning cast member to bring genuine oomph to proceedings, with his distinctive transatlantic voice: a kind of cockney-with-a-twist-of-Chicago. Dolph Lundgren is back again as Jensen, and Randy Couture encores as Toll Road. Newcomer Andy Garcia ambles cordially in and out as Marsh, the CIA minder.

The newbies in the team include Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson playing Easy Day, Megan Fox as Christmas's ass-kicking girlfriend Gina and Levy Tran is another superhot martial arts person called Lash. The Expendables are letting women into the fold, but they have to be young and attractive, and the



gang are evidently uninterested in the whole age-gap discourse. The Expendables in the past have had a habit of patronising Asian cast members, but they more or less refrain from that here with two martial arts stars: Indonesian Iko Uwais as Rahmat, a ruthless terrorist, and Thai actor Tony Jaa as the gang's ally, Decha.

As ever, the guys are texting it in – or most of them, as Statham looks as if he could handle some comic dialogue (or any sort of dialogue) if he was given the chance. The fight scenes are fine, but the digital effects really are moderate, all expense spared, with some crashes and explosions that look as if they were created on an iPhone app.

Games



Lies of P
PC, Xbox, PS5

★★★★☆

Lies of P, a lengthy, moody, hard-action RPG, is a characteristically difficult iteration of the Soulslike subgenre, but with style, inventiveness, and passion. It's got real heart, despite the occasional sterility in its characters and forays into body horror, but its puppet enemies, environments, and quixotic follies do a fine job of establishing a sense of fairytale dread and whimsy.

You spend the vast majority of its runtime hitting murderous puppets with a selection of bladed objects, from rapiers to umbrellas, gargantuan sawblades to acidic spears. It feels slower than Bloodborne and Sekiro but faster than Dark Souls, with blocking and parrying taking point alongside the less emphasised but still useful sidesteps and dodge rolls. Outside combat, Lies of P stands out in two areas: things FromSoft does well that no other Soulslike has managed to pull off, and creative tweaks to classic FromSoft issues. The former involves mysterious NPC questlines and winding level design through spectacular architecture, as well as genuinely inventive "gotcha" moments. The latter consists of genius tweaks: lost souls from boss deaths, healing items recharging from enemy kills and (gasp!) elevators that reset to their original position when you die so you don't have to wait ages for a lift to Blighttown.

It clings a bit too tightly to Bloodborne; there is a difference between copying someone's homework and stealing it out of their bag. But it is said that "good artists borrow; great artists steal" – if only all mimicry was this well-executed. The boy may be wooden, but Lies of P is the real deal.

Nic Reuben



Alexis Petridis's album of the week

Doja Cat Scarlet



All-conquering star comes out swinging

Rap

Label Kemosabe/RCA

★★★☆☆

From the start, hip-hop has thrived on conflict. Between the ostensibly lighthearted insults of battle rapping to the internecine feuds that range from jokey to fatal, it's hard to think of another musical arena so riven with disputes. They occur with such frequency that Doja Cat spends a couple of verses on her fourth album declining to take part. She has, she claims, risen to the top "with no confrontation", despite attempts to pit her against Nicki Minaj: "I never gave a F," she snaps. "Go stir the pot, bitch."

You might receive this in disbelief, given that Doja Cat has opened up a whole new frontier in conflict: even in the rap world, going to war with your own fanbase feels extraordinary. It started when fans questioned her choice of boyfriend - social media star J Cyrus, who has been accused of emotional abuse - and escalated very quickly. "I NEVER WILL GIVE A FUCK WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT ME… GOODBYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE MISERABLE HOES," the rapper wrote in response, disparaging the hardcore supporters who call themselves Kittenz. She lost more than 500,000 Instagram followers, an experience she compared to "defeat[ing] a large beast".

It seems nuts but there is something serious at its centre. This is the era of the stan, the diehard fan given to an alarming degree of ownership over the object of their adoration. Equally, it's very on-brand. It's hard to keep count of the supposedly career-ending infractions Doja Cat has committed which have caused a flurry of online outrage but ultimately had no impact on her popularity. Should the point require underlining, her most recent single Paint the Town Red is an escalation of hostilities, from its opening line - "Bitch, I said what I said" - to its description of rabid fans as "extremists" to its sample from Dionne Warwick's Walk on By recontextualised to suggest cold diffidence. It was the most popular song in the world for two weeks, according to Billboard's global chart.

It opens Scarlet and sets the tone for the album, which primarily concerns itself with raining brimstone on her stans: "Since when was y'all my bastard children?"; "keep your money"; "you do not exist to me, I am not your friend". But even when she



doesn't come out swinging, recent events appear to colour what is here, from the note of defiance that underscores the slow-jam love songs - "whether they like it or not I wanna show you off … rub it in their face" she coos on Agora Hills - to Shutcho's deployment of a sample from 10cc's I'm Not in Love: during the online row, the rapper responded to a request to tell her fans she loved them with "I don't though cuz I don't even know y'all."

Doja Cat has talked up Scarlet as a hip-hop album, in contrast to its poppy predecessor, Planet Her, and the latest controversy has given a pugilistic force to her rapping: she sounds furious above the horror movie strings and distorted beats of Demons, her voice flipping between bored indifference and furious snarl. There are pop hooks but fewer than usual, while at its most dramatic, it strikes out in a distinctly experimental vein: 97's off-key piano is rhythmically untethered from the beat; Ouchies offers a thrilling cacophony of sirens and synth stabs.

The desire to flaunt her current relationship at length means Scarlet loses the snappy brevity that was Planet Her's calling-card. After a while, you feel that points that have already been made are being reiterated, and a long album is made to seem longer still by its weird structure, a glut of abstract tracks taking up its second half.

It strikes something like a conciliatory tone with Love Life's acknowledgments of its author's bad temper, although on closer inspection, what the track is really doing is drawing another line: between the stans and the fans. She sounds confident there's enough of them to make Scarlet another huge hit, despite its imperfections. She is doubtless right.

More reviews at theguardian.com/music

Contemporary album of the month

Artist Tomas Fujiwara

Album Pith

Label Out of Your Head Records

★★★★☆



Drummer Tomas Fujiwara has been a fixture on New York's jazz scene for more than a decade and he is also an adventurous composer. Here, his incredibly detailed dense pieces have been written to suit the unique talents of his bandmates - the vibraphonist Patricia Brennan and the cellist Tomeka Reid.

Reid, usually playing pizzicato, sounds as if she's playing a double bass, which makes some of this album sound like a minty-fresh vibes/bass/drums jazz trio but Fujiwara's compositions move far beyond the jazz realm, nudging into ambient, post-rock and classical territory. On Resolve, Brennan plays discordant voicings while Reid and Fujiwara sound like a throbbing power station. Other is a chaotic patchwork of musical fragments, free improv style. Breath is a wonderfully meditative piece that appears to be written in a 9/4 time signature. Best of all is the pulsating minimalism of Swelter, where Brennan's jabbering vibes melody and Reid's motoring basslines are set to an urgent krautrock beat. **John Lewis**

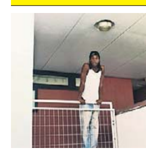
Pop

Artist Bakar

Album Halo

Label Black Butter

★★☆☆☆



British star Bakar (who has nearly 10m listeners a month on Spotify) tweaks the sensitive male pop singer mould on a second album that is stylish but leans towards the maudlin. Halo bears all the hallmarks of contemporary "genreless" pop: early-2010s indie guitars, spaciousness, vocals that slip from ragged soul crooning to an emo whine in an instant. It is crammed with weepy ballads that skew painfully boilerplate: Selling Biscuits evokes Skins-level teen tropes, concluding that the one drug we are all addicted to is … love.

Even the more sprightly tracks, such as loner anthem Invisible, seem transmitted from the depths of a fugue state. Such is the danger of refusing to pick a lane: you may just end up totally adrift. **Shaad D'Souza**

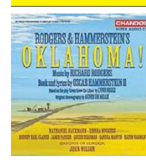
Classical

Artist Hackmann/Boggess/Sinfonia of London/Wilson

Album Rodgers & Hammerstein: Oklahoma!

Label Chandos, two CDs

★★★★☆



John Wilson started off as a conductor of musical theatre before going on to success in a much wider repertoire. But, as this first-ever complete recording of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's Oklahoma! demonstrates, he has maintained his connections.

Wilson conducts exactly what the audience would have heard on the opening night of Oklahoma! in New York in 1943. It's as scrupulously prepared as any historically informed baroque performance, with energy and purpose. Sometimes the sheer quality of the orchestral playing threatens to overshadow the singers, but led by Nathaniel Hackmann as Curly and Sierra Boggess as Laurey, with Rodney Earl Clarke as Jud Fry, the whole cast seems to have been prepared as meticulously as every other aspect. **Andrew Clements**



Extraordinary charisma ... Ncuti Gatwa as Eric

Review Sex Education, Netflix

An earnest safe space that misses the glee of youthful passion

★★★☆☆

Lucy Mangan



September is the time for waving off teenagers to start new chapters in their wondrously energetic lives. The powers that be have decided to offer us no respite from this mournful process and dropped the departure of Otis, Eric, Maeve, Aimee, Adam and the rest of the Moordale gang into the emotional mix with the fourth and final series of Sex Education.

Not that they are the Moordale gang any more. The old school site has been sold to developers and we join them as Maeve (Emma Mackey) begins her writing course at Wallace University in the US, Adam (Connor Swindells) starts a new job at a local stables, and Otis (Asa Butterfield), Eric (Ncuti Gatwa) and Aimee (Aimee Lou Wood) shift their A-levels and angst to Cavendish College. This is an impeccably woke, student-led safe space, which is nice for students, but less rewarding for viewers, because it transforms the series into what feels like a vast box-ticking enterprise.

What used to mark Sex Education out from the crowd was the authenticity at its heart. It captured the glee that young people bring to sex, relationships and everything else, and handled their fears with the same care, flair and insight. Their personal entanglements were what mattered most, however, and storylines - from the bullying turned tenderness between Eric and Adam to the bumpy road to attraction followed by Isaac (George Robinson) and Maeve, bonded by their childhood damage - grew out of carefully constructed characters.

This time around, almost the opposite is true. At Cavendish, we are introduced to a bunch of newcomers who never amount to much more than symbols of the categories it has apparently felt essential to include. Aisha (Alexandra James) is deaf and given little to do other than remind people to let her see their mouths when they speak, and later join Isaac in a clunky speech about disability rights. There is gender identity representation via Abbi and Roman, with the latter seemingly there solely to offer Cal (Dua Saleh) the sight of someone further down the road to transition and fill in viewers on the length of waiting lists and the costs of private surgery. If Sex Education were staying true to its early, far more radical roots, it might do more than just hint at the potential downsides of relentless positivity, but here the rule remains absolute affirmation only. Asexuality is also given a shoutout and, over in the US, Ellen (Marie Reuther), a fellow student on Maeve's course, is simply a bundle of privileges that Maeve is without.

The overstuffed cast means that everyone and everything is underdeveloped. From Jackson worrying about what it means that he enjoyed a girlfriend putting her finger up his bum to the many crushing blows dealt to Maeve, nothing has room to breathe. That includes characters we had previously come to care for. Cal's story is sidelined until it is suddenly needed for a dramatic finale; Maeve and Otis circle each other endlessly and uselessly; Aimee often descends into caricature - the list of frustrations goes on. And when it comes to the hokey business surrounding Eric's journey towards accommodation with his God and church, it only succeeds in any way because of Gatwa's extraordinary talent and charisma.

That is before you add in everything going on in the adult world. Jean (Gillian Anderson) has postnatal depression, her maddening sister, Joanna (Lisa McGrillis), is staying, and she has a load of joint childhood trauma to work out. Adam's dad, Michael (Alistair Petrie), is trying to be a better man and have sex with someone who is not his ex-wife. Dan Levy as Maeve's college tutor is woefully underused in what could have been a great turn as an embittered man-baby out to crush his promising students' dreams.

Also dragging down the mood is the fact that everyone - and not just the sex therapist O (Thaddea Graham), who is already set up at Cavendish - use therapy speak at all times. Sex Education scripts used to be fleet and funny. Now, everyone is earnest, delivering life lessons at every turn and making you long for the days when humour was still an honoured part of the human condition.

The final series has its moments, mostly when it returns to the core cast and regains the confidence to let them do their still-glorious, alchemical thing together. The rest is heavy going and the goodbye less painful that it should have been.

Married at First Sight UK
10pm, Channel 4



"This is my last time getting married. If it doesn't work ... we won't be doing a third." So says one of the 16 contestants ready to walk down the aisle with a total stranger. It's the eighth season of the UK leg of the Married at First Sight franchise and - with a concept that still never fails to blow the mind - it's set to be as wild as ever. Experts Mel Schilling, Paul C Brunson and Charlene Douglas are in the wings to give a guiding hand. It's refreshing to see a diverse cast, too.
Hollie Richardson

Gardeners' World
8pm, BBC Two
Get ready for your weekly dose of horticultural therapy, with a special show from a real hidden gem of a garden - York Gate, on the outskirts of Leeds. Rachel de Thame, Adam Frost and Frances Tophill have all the jobs to do in September, while Jamie Butterworth checks out the walled garden at Scampston Hall up the road in North Yorkshire. Plus, there is a treat for hibiscus fans.
Hannah Verdier

PopMaster TV
8pm, Channel 4
Catherine Zeta-Jones had a Top 40 hit in 1999 with which singer? Show Me Heaven featured in which Tom Cruise movie? These are two of the questions contestants need to answer correctly, along with guessing a lot of songs, for a place in the final. **HR**

Billions
9pm, Sky Atlantic
Halfway into the final series of Damian Lewis's fancy drama about the mega-rich and Prince's new play is all part of a masterplan to raise his political profile. But it puts Philip in a tricky situation. Meanwhile, Senior's ill-judged move lands Chuck and Wendy in a family crisis. **HR**

Warrior
10pm, Sky Max
It's back to the volatile streets of 1870s San Francisco for more of the punchy crime drama that was originally devised by none other than Bruce Lee. Nellie's vineyard sanctuary for sex workers lies in ashes, forcing the madam, Ah Toy, to return to her Chinatown brothel. Meanwhile, Mai Ling is making high-stakes business deals over pocket billiards.
Graeme Virtue

Drift: Partners in Crime
10.10pm, Sky Atlantic
The German thriller continues with tonight's double-bill, equal parts police procedural and fraternal buddy drama. The Zeller brothers have a chance to capture Maryam's attacker, but with deadly consequences. To make matters worse, it becomes clear that they haven't covered their tracks as carefully as they thought.
Phil Harrison

What's On
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BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Morning Live (T) **10.0** Fraud Squad (T) **10.45** Claimed and Shamed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Five Bedrooms (T) **2.30** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** Make It at Market (T)

8.0 **Dragons' Den** (T) (R) Vahid and Thibault pitch their planet-saving product as the solution to the plastic bag.
9.0 **Would I Lie to You?** (T) (R) With Pam Ayres, Sarah Kendall, Richard Osman and Kiell Smith-Bynoe.
9.30 **Mrs Brown's Boys** (T) Rumours swirl around that Agnes has won the Lotto.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 FILM **Magic Mike** (Steven Soderbergh, 2012) (T) A veteran male stripper teaches a young dancer the tricks of the trade. Comedy drama, starring Channing Tatum and Matthew McConaughey.
12.25 **Weather** (T) **12.30** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Money for Nothing** (T) (R) **7.15** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics UK (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Murder, Mystery and My Family: Case Closed? (T) (R) **3.0** Kelvin's Big Farming Adventure (T) (R) **3.30** Great Canadian Railway Journeys (T) (R) **4.0** Serengeti (T) (R) **5.0** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Tales from a Kitchen Garden (T) **7.0** Golf: Solheim Cup Highlights (T)

8.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) At York Gate in Leeds, Adam Frost, Rachel de Thame and Frances Tophill celebrate a garden for all seasons and tackle seasonal jobs for September.
9.0 **Snow Dogs** (T) (R) Wildlife film-maker Gordon Buchanan teams up with seven huskies to take on a dog-sledding trail in the Yukon, Canada.

10.0 **Red Dwarf** (T) (R)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby** (T) (R) A visit to Borgo Egnazia in Puglia, Italy.
12.05 **The Hidden World of Hospitality** (T) (R) **1.05** Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast (T) **2.05** Sign Zone: Helping Our Teens (T) (R) **3.05** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Spanish Adventure (T) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Rugby World Cup 2023 Live (T) Argentina v Samoa (kick-off 4.45pm). **7.0** Local News and Weather (T) **7.15** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) Stephen fears that the game is up when police identify the dead body.
9.0 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) Davina McCall's dating show draws to a close. She shocks the parents when revealing the grownup kids' role in their time at the retreat. Last in the series.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **The NFL Show** (T) Highlights of San Francisco 49ers v New York Giants.
11.40 **My Mum, Your Dad** (T) (R)
12.30 **Extreme E Highlights** (T) **1.25** All Elite Wrestling (T) (R) **3.05** Spanish Adventure (T) (R) **3.55** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.10** Tenable (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **PopMaster TV** (T) (R) Ken Bruce hosts the fifth heat of the music competition, based on the popular, long-running radio quiz, which sees several more players compete for a place in the grand final.
9.0 **Gogglebox** (T) The armchair critics share their opinions on what they have been watching during the week.

10.0 **Married at First Sight UK** (T) New series.
11.35 **Married at First Sight UK** (T) Four more singles enter.
12.35 **Married at First Sight UK** (T) **1.30** Married at First Sight UK (T) **2.30** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.15** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.25** Beat the Chef (T) (R) **5.55** The King of Queens (T)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Deadly Payback (Rolfe Kanefsky, 2020) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Susan Calman's Grand Day Out (T) (R) **7.0** Alexander Armstrong in Sri Lanka (T) (R)

8.0 **Puppy School for Guide Dogs** (T) It is a big day for Hester as assessors consider whether she is ready to be paired with Pickle. Last in the series.
9.0 **Amazing Railway Adventures With Nick Knowles** (T) New series. In the first episode, the presenter explores Prague, Bratislava and Budapest.

10.0 **Loch Ness: Hunting the Monster** (T)
12.0 **Underwater Stonehenge: The Missing Link** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Friends (T) (R) **3.25** Friends (T) (R) **3.50** Britain's Greatest Bridges (T) (R) **4.40** Great Scientists (T) (R) **5.05** House Doctor (T) (R) **5.35** Paw Patrol (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1995, with M People, Céline Dion and Annie Lennox. **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1995, featuring MN8, Elton John and Elastica.

8.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1988, with Pet Shop Boys, Womack & Womack and Bill Withers.
8.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1981, with Slade, Depeche Mode, Madness, Imagination and Adam and the Ants.
9.0 **Country at the BBC** (T) (R) A compilation of performances by country artists.

10.30 **Arena: Hank Williams: – Honky Tonk Blues** (T) (R) Profile of the American country singer-songwriter.
11.50 FILM **I Saw the Light** (Marc Abraham, 2015) (T) Biopic of Hank Williams, starring Tom Hiddleston and Elizabeth Olsen.
1.45 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) Four episodes.

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Frozen Planet **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Gavin & Stacey **9.0** Being Louis Rees-Zammit **10.0** FILM Sorry to Bother You (2018) **11.45** The Bold Type **12.25** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **1.25** Juice **1.55** Juice **2.20** 7 Minutes **2.30** Gavin & Stacey

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Top Gear **9.0** DIY SOS: Homes for Veterans **10.0** Railroad Australia **11.0** Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey **12.0** Ultimate Movers **1.0** Sin City Motors **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Australian Ninja Warrior **5.30** Gino's Italian Escape **6.0** Rick Stein's Long Weekends **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** QI XL **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **2.30** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.0** This Country **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.05** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.05** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** First Dates Ireland **9.0** FILM Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle (2017) **11.20** Naked Attraction **12.30** Naked Attraction **1.35** Gogglebox **2.35** First Dates **3.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.55** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.20** The Goldbergs **4.45** The Goldbergs **5.10** Black-ish **5.35** Black-ish

Film4

11.0am FILM Tobruk (1967) **1.15** FILM Man of the West (1958) **3.20** FILM The Guns of Navarone (1961) **6.35** FILM Mortal Engines (2018) **9.0** FILM Snake Eyes (2021) **11.20** FILM Patriot Games (1992) **1.35** FILM Red Heat (1988)

ITV2

6.0am CITV: Craig of the Creek **6.10** Teen Titans Go! **6.25** Teen Titans Go! **6.40** Teen Titans Go! **6.50** DC Super Hero Girls **7.05** Looney Tunes Cartoons **7.20** Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous **7.45** Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! **8.10** What's New Scooby-Doo? **8.35** Scooby-Doo and Guess Who? **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Family Fortunes **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Family Fortunes **8.0** Superstore **8.30** Superstore **9.0** FILM Pitch Perfect (2012) **11.15** Family Guy **11.45** Family Guy **12.10** American Dad! **12.40** American Dad! **1.10** Superstore **1.40** Superstore **2.10** Iain Stirling's CelebAbility **2.45** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** Dodo **5.15** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.35** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max

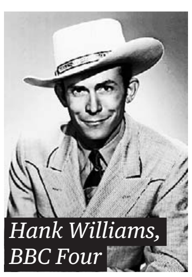
6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Strike Back: Retribution **9.0** The Lazarus Project **10.0** Warrior **11.0** FILM Fist of Fury (1972) **1.0** The Blacklist **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Darbar Festival 2018 **7.0** Anyone Can Sing **8.0** The Joy of Painting **8.30** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Richard Gere **12.0** The Joy of Painting **12.30** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Camille Pissarro: The Father of Impressionism **4.0** Discovering: Dennis Hopper **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Discovering: Morgan Freeman **9.0** Suzi Q **1.10** Brian Johnson's A Life on the Road **2.10** 27: Gone Too Soon **3.50** Live from the Artists Den **5.0** Inside Art: Masterpieces from Buckingham Palace

Sky Atlantic

6.10am Urban Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Raised By Wolves **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** Billions **10.10** Drift: Partners in Crime **11.10** Drift: Partners in Crime **12.10** Das Boot **1.10** In Treatment **1.40** Game of Thrones **2.50** Game of Thrones **4.0** Urban Secrets **5.0** Urban Secrets


Hank Williams, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Girolamo Frescobaldi (5/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. At NI Opera's Festival of Voice 2023, music inspired by the salon of Winnaretta Singer, La Princesse de Polignac. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Ulster Orchestra perform Stravinsky's Symphony in C, and Ragna Schirmer is the soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 27 with the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra. **4.30** The Listening Service (R) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Keri-Lynn Wilson conducts the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, violinist Valeriy Sokolov, Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic Choir in Bialystok and soloists in Verdi's La forza del destino: overture, Yevhen Stankovych's Violin Concerto No 2 and Beethoven's Symphony No 9 in D minor, Op 125. **10.0** The Verb. Live from the Contains Strong Language festival in Leeds. **10.45** The Essay: Unearthing Britannia's Tribes. The earliest accounts of King Arthur. (R) **11.0** Late Junction **1.0** Ultimate Calm (R) **2.0** Happy Harmonies With Laufey (R) **3.0** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** Desert Island Discs (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service. A service from Christ Church, Kyiv. **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Material World. By Ed Conway. (5/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Briefing Room (R) **11.30** What's Funny About (4/6) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Archive on 4: The Hundred Year Ego (R) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** NatureBang. People's drive to get intoxicated. (5/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** The System. Thriller, by Ben Lewis. (2/5) **2.45** Close Encounters (R) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** Short Works. Goosegrass, by Emma Kane. **4.0** Last Word **4.30** More Or Less (R) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The News Quiz (3/8) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Screenshot. News and insights from the film world with Ellen E Jones and Mark Kermode. (7/9) **8.0** Any Questions? With Baroness Anderson, Andrew Mitchell MP and Layla Moran MP. **8.50** A Point of View **9.0** The Bailout (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Secret Hours. By Mick Herron. (5/10) **11.0** Americast **11.30** Science Stories. The life of Scotland's first female doctor. (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week: Material World (5/5) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Close Encounters (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Paul Temple and the Conrad Case (3/8) **6.30** Death Speaks Another Language (6/6) **7.0** How to Find Home (5/10) **7.15** Hester (5/5) **7.30** The Break (4/6) **8.0** Marriage Lines (8/13) **8.30** Sketches By Boz (4/5) **9.0** Whispers (3/6) **9.30** Barbara Nice **10.0** The Jacobean Box **11.0** Paul Temple and the Conrad Case (3/8) **11.30** Death Speaks Another Language (6/6) **12.0** How to Find Home (5/10) **12.15** Hester (5/5) **12.30** The Break (4/6) **1.0** Marriage Lines (8/13) **1.30** Sketches By Boz (4/5) **2.0** Whispers (3/6) **2.30** Barbara Nice **3.0** The Jacobean Box **4.0** Paul Temple and the Conrad Case (3/8) **4.30** Death Speaks Another Language (6/6) **5.0** How to Find Home (5/10) **5.15** Hester (5/5) **5.30** The Break (4/6) **6.0** Marriage Lines (8/13) **6.30** Sketches By Boz (4/5) **7.0** Whispers (3/6) **7.30** Barbara Nice **8.0** India's Classical Music Marathon **8.30** Soul Music (3/8) **9.0** The Curious Cases of Rutherford & Fry (5/6) **9.30** The Long Drop (5/10) **9.45** The Dead Hour (5/10) **10.0** Comedy Club: Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? (4/5) **10.30** Beauty of Britain (5/6) **11.0** 2000 Years of Radio (4/6) **11.15** Steven Appleby's Normal Life (4/6) **11.30** Listen Against (4/4) **12.0** Body Horror (2/3) **12.45** Get Carter: The Bloody Chamber (2/5) **1.0** The Jacobean Box **2.0** Paul Temple and the Conrad Case (3/8) **2.30** Death Speaks Another Language (6/6) **3.0** How to Find Home (5/10) **3.15** Hester (5/5) **3.30** The Break (4/6) **4.0** Marriage Lines (8/13) **4.30** Sketches By Boz (4/5) **5.0** Whispers (3/6) **5.30** Barbara Nice

Puzzles

Quick crossword no 16,655

1		2		3		#	4	5		6		7
	#		#		#	8	#		#		#	
9							#	10				
	#		#		#		#		#		#	
11					#	12						
	#	#	#		#		#	#	#		#	
#	13	14						15				#
16	#		#	#	#		#		#	#	#	17
18				19			#	20		21		
	#		#		#		#		#		#	
22					#	23						
	#		#		#		#		#		#	
24						#	25					

Across
1 Powerful - stringy (6)
4 German playwright, author of Mother Courage and Her Children, d 1956 (6)
9 African country - ruin dub (anag) (7)
10 Administered corporal punishment (5)
11 Bottomless chasm (5)
12 It's impossible to see without one! (7)
13 Buffet-style meal (11)
18 Type of quadrilateral (7)
20 Nothing (5)
22 Dislike intensely (5)
23 Affair (7)
24 Minutes for a football match (not counting stoppages or extra time) (6)
25 Repulsive (6)

Down
1 Passage underground (6)
2 Excitable (5)
3 A royal house (7)
5 Explore - scout (informal) (5)
6 Man with a body like a horse? (7)
7 Little - squiffy (6)
8 Buried container for future discovery (4,7)
14 Mainly black aquatic rail (7)
15 Most common UK bird of prey (7)
16 Take into holy orders (6)
17 Cheers (6)
19 Exploded (5)
21 Horse-catching rope (5)

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Sudoku no 6,211

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

7					4			
		3						4
		9			5		6	8
					6		5	9
			2	8	9			
9	4		3					
1	7		8			9		
6						3		
			4					7

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

		1			
	5				4
			3		

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words about darts in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

M	P	A	Y	T	F	W	I	I
N	I	I	N	C	H	A	L	K
M	N	U	S	H	A	F	T	W
B	O	E	L	B	U	O	D	O
C	U	L	T	I	A	D	I	R
K	E	L	E	O	A	N	N	H
R	B	M	L	R	P	S	N	T
O	O	P	T	S	R	S	E	E
C	A	S	D	A	E	A	R	I
T	R	E	B	L	E	Y	B	N
S	D	E	R	O	C	S	E	E

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku no 6,210

7	1	5	3	6	8	9	2	4
6	9	3	2	7	4	1	5	8
2	8	4	5	9	1	3	7	6
5	2	6	4	8	3	7	9	1
8	3	7	6	1	9	2	4	5
1	4	9	7	5	2	8	6	3
9	6	8	1	2	5	4	3	7
3	7	2	8	4	6	5	1	9
4	5	1	9	3	7	6	8	2

Suguru

2	4	2	3	2	4
3	1	5	4	1	3
5	4	3	2	5	2
1	2	1	4	3	1
3	5	3	5	2	4
1	2	1	4	3	1

Wordsearch

S	R	D	R	K	M	R	Y	M
E	T	O	F	E	O	V	A	A
V	U	A	P	U	N	O	E	T
O	O	A	N	E	E	R	H	C
L	B	D	D	I	S	A	O	H
G	S	T	H	C	N	I	L	C
P	B	R	U	I	S	E	S	K
U	V	P	A	R	R	Y	C	G
N	T	H	G	I	F	O	N	E
C	I	A	E	L	L	I	N	M
H	T	L	E	B	R	S	T	E

Solution no 16,654

#	T	R	U	S	T	Y	#	S	T	A	I	R
#	E	#	N	#	E	#	#	T	#	E	#	E
C	A	N	C	E	L	#	H	Y	B	R	I	D
#	S	#	L	#	E	#	#	L	#	O	#	E
S	H	O	E	#	P	A	P	E	R	B	O	Y
#	O	#	A	#	H	#	I	#	#	I	#	E
#	P	E	R	I	O	D	P	I	E	C	E	#
A	#	N	#	#	N	#	E	#	G	#	C	#
D	I	S	M	A	Y	E	D	#	O	U	S	E
D	#	L	#	W	#	#	R	#	T	#	T	#
I	N	A	W	A	Y	#	E	L	I	J	A	H
C	#	V	#	R	#	#	A	#	S	#	S	#
T	R	E	N	D	#	S	M	I	T	H	Y	#

Word wheel
ADORATION

Trivia corner

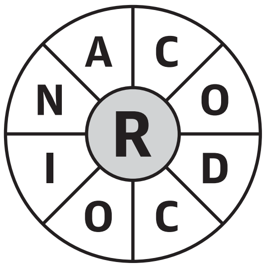


Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour is likely to become the highest-grossing concert movie ever. What film will it have to beat?

a. Justin Bieber: Never Say Never
b. Madonna: Truth or Dare
c. Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds
d. One Direction: This Is Us
*Answer top right**

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-42. Good-35. Average-26.



Garry Trudeau

Doonesbury



*TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **JUSTIN BIEBER: NEVER SAY NEVER**